THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

LOUIS DE COMBES

The finding of the cross.
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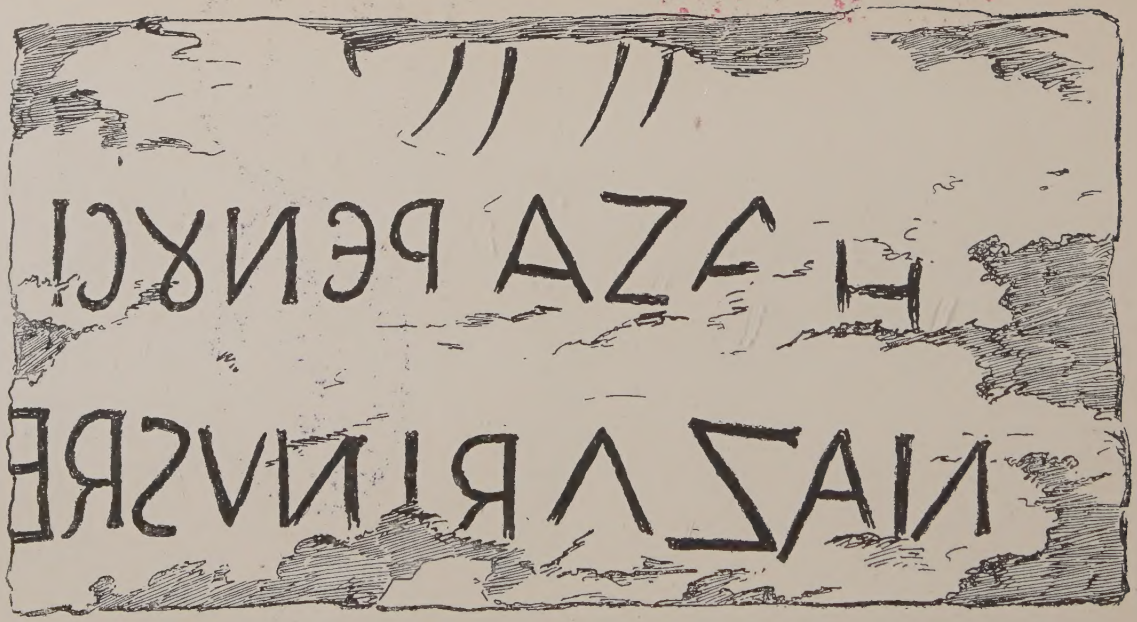


THE TRILINGUAL "TITLE OF THE CROSS"

THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

BY

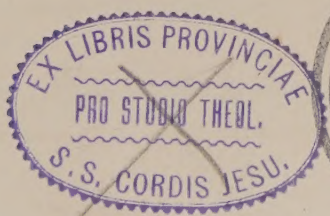
LOUIS DE COMBES

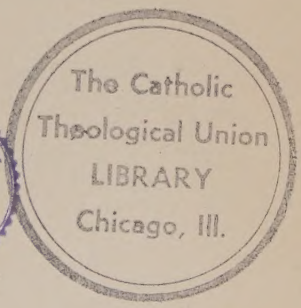
WITHDRAWN

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION

BY

LUIGI CAPPADELTA





NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO
BENZIGER BROTHERS
PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE
1907

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PREFATORY NOTE OF THE AUTHOR

We quote the Fathers according to Migne's *Patrologia*; *P.L.* stands for the Latin, *P.G.* for the Greek Patrology; in either case the figures following the Roman numeral show the number of the column.

Acta SS. refers to the Acta Sanctorum of the Bollandists. *Exuv.* stands for Comte de Riant's *Exuviæ Sacræ Constantinopolitanæ.*

The ancient Palestine-Pilgrims' texts are quoted from Tobler and Molinier's *Itinera et descriptiones Terræ Sanctæ*, from Michelant and Raynaud's *Itinéraires à Jérusalem*, and from Mme. de Khitrowo's translation, *Itinéraires russes en Orient.* All three collections were published under the auspices of the *Société de l'Orient latin.*

We have also made great use of Canon Ulysse Chevalier's *Répertoire des sources historiques du moyen-âge*, one of the most trustworthy sources of information, and of Molinier and Kohler's *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, in which much of our material is classified chronologically.

We must also express our deep gratitude to the Abbé Parayre, editor of the *Revue de l'Université catholique*, for having published some of our essays;

to M. Hugues Vaganay, the erudite librarian of the Catholic University, who furnished us with much useful information, and also to Father Baudouy, the Superior of the monastery of Notre-Dame-de-France (Jerusalem), and to Father Leopold Dressaire, a professor at the same establishment, who kindly consented to correct our sketch of the Holy Places.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

We have made full use of the permission given us by the Author to incorporate in this work any additional notes we judged necessary, even where they are at variance with the Author's own views; these notes are enclosed in square brackets. We have also embodied in the translation a few emendations suggested by the Author, and have been at pains to verify as far as possible the references.

THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

CHAPTER I

THE HOLY PLACES IN THE YEAR 33[1]

THIRTY-SEVEN years after the Passion of Christ, the Jerusalem which He had known was wiped out of existence by the legionaries of Titus; in the next century Adrian had the ruins cleared, and buried what remained of the Holy Places beneath the foundations of a new city, to which he gave the name of *Ælia Capitolina*; Constantine's misdirected piety pushed even further the work of destruction, for

[1] See C. J. M. de Vogüé, *Les Églises de Terre Sainte.* Paris, 1860. F. Caignart de Saulcy, *Voyage en Terre Sainte,* 2nd ed. vol. ii. p. 39 *f.* Paris: Didier, 1872. Victor Guérin, *La Terre Sainte et Jérusalem,* p. 77 *f.* Paris: Plon, 1897. Zanecchia, *La Palestina d'oggi,* studiata e descritta nei suoi santuari e nelle sue località bibliche e storiche. Translated into French as *La Palestine d'aujourd'hui, ses Sanctuaires, ses Localités bibliques et historiques* by H. Dorangeon. Paris: Lethielleux. *Huit jours à Jérusalem,* Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris. (This is a valuable work, written by an Assumptionist, a member of the monastery of Notre-Dame-de-France at Jerusalem.) Ollivier, *La Passion,* c. i. Paris: Lethielleux, 1898. [English trans., *The Passion,* by Leahy. Boston, 1901.] F. Martin, *Archéologie de la Passion* (a French translation and adaptation of J. H. Friedlieb's work). Paris: Lethielleux, 1897. Lagrange, *Topographie de Jérusalem* in the *Revue biblique,* 1892, p. 17. [See also Fergusson, *Essay on the Ancient Topography of Jerusalem.* London: Weale, 1847, and the authorities quoted in the *Encyclopædia Biblica,* art. Jerusalem.—*Trans.*]

after having brought to light Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre, he had the ground levelled, so that there remained above the surface only the tomb of Christ and the block of granite which once had borne the Cross. Since the time of Constantine matters have gone steadily from bad to worse; the Persians under Chosroas,[1] the workmen of the monk Modestus,[2] Omar's Arabs, and Hakem's incendiaries, Constantine Monomachus, later on the Crusaders, and lastly the Turks, have all done their share towards obliterating the remaining traces of antiquity. Where are the places which have been sanctified by the blood of Christ and the tears of the Blessed Virgin and of the Holy Women? Where is the stone on which the angel sat? Where was that last scene enacted which re-opened to sinful humanity the gates of the heaven it had lost? To reconstruct the scene, to find the position of Golgotha and of the garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathæa, to put together, in a word, the local framework of the greatest event in history, the Christian is reduced to groping among the works of Josephus and the few faint vestiges of the past which casual excavations bring to light; the most he can do is to dream of things which he can no longer see. This archæological raising up of that which is now no more would require a lengthier consideration and discussion than we can well afford to give now, hence our readers must pardon us if our description of the Holy Places is very summary.[3]

[1] See L. de Combes, *De l'invention à l'exaltation de la S. Croix*, Paris, 1903, p. 238 *ff.*

[2] *Ibid.* p. 254 *ff.*

[3] We shall follow, in our topographical description, the maps and plans adopted by Zanecchia, *op. cit.* We hereinafter quote from the French translation of this writer's work.

1. CALVARY

"The city," says Josephus,[1] "is built upon two hills which are opposite to one another and have a valley to divide them asunder; at which valley the corresponding rows of houses on both hills end. Of these hills, that which contains the upper city is much higher, and in length more direct. Accordingly it was called the 'Citadel' by King David, who was the father of that Solomon who built the Temple."[2] Accordingly on modern plans the higher or western city is styled Mount Sion, the lower or eastern city is described as Ophel, and the valley lying between the two quarters is called the Tyropœon [or vale of the Cheesemongers]. However, the learned monks of the Dominican convent of St. Stephen and of the monastery of Notre-Dame-de-France[3] now admit that Josephus was in the wrong. Ophel, though more than 150 feet below the higher city, was in all probability the locality in which was situated the fortress of the Jebusites and of David. Of it alone can it be said, as we find it stated in the Psalms, that it is surrounded by mountains;[4] it was only much later that the name of Sion, which had been a synonym of Ophel, was given to the higher city on account of the Christian memories it contained.[5] In his turn Solomon con-

[1] *Wars of the Jews,* Whiston's trans., V. iv. 1.

[2] Tacitus says (*Hist.* v. 11): "The walls enclosed two hills covered by a multitude of dwellings."

[3] As representing the Dominicans, see Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 236, *sq.*; representing the Assumptionists we have the work alluded to above, *Huit jours à Jérusalem,* p. 29, *sq.*

[4] Ps. cxxiv. 2. Montes in circuitu ejus.

[5] This had occurred already in the fourth century, for the higher city is thus described by the Bordeaux Pilgrim (333) and St. Jerome.

structed the Temple at the north-eastern extremity of the earliest walls of the city, on Mount Moriah, which thus was incorporated with Jerusalem.

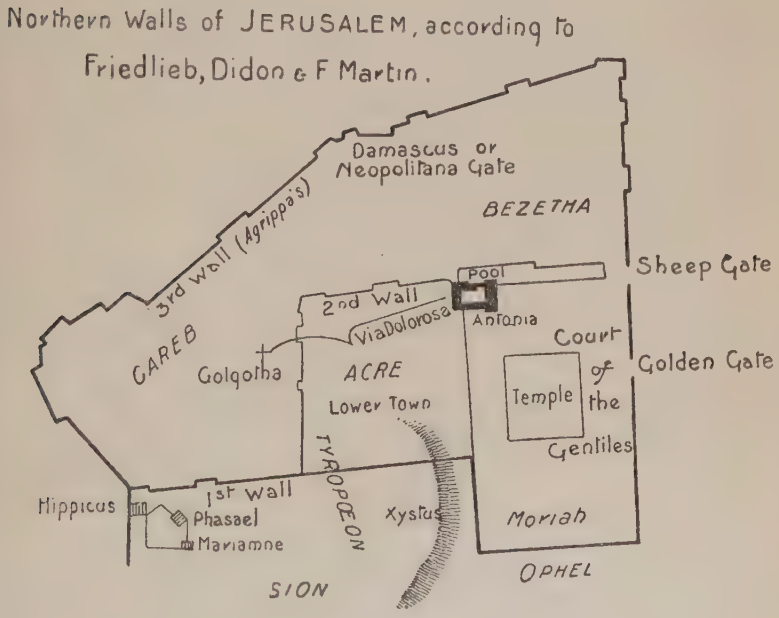
From the east, south, and west the city was impregnable, "being surrounded by deep valleys, and by reason of the precipices to them belonging, on both sides."[1] Its walls overlooked the ravine formed by the Cedron, the field of Haceldama, and the valleys of Gehenna and Hinnom. The existence of these natural barriers also made impossible any growth of the city in these directions; but towards the north it was otherwise, for here the mountain gradually shelved towards Golgotha, Gareb, and Bezetha. Hence it was here, especially on Acra, that new quarters began to spring up, calling also for the construction of new fortifications; such was the so-called second wall built by Ezechias, and the third wall, raised by Herod Agrippa (of this last we shall have no more to say, as it was erected after the death of Christ); it was also this side of the city which had to bear the onslaughts of the enemies of Israel, whether Assyrians or Romans.

In 33 the north-western angle of the first wall (that of David and Solomon) was occupied by Herod's palace, which was overtopped by the three great towers, Hippicus,[2] Phazaelus, and that of Mariamne. The north wall ran directly east and west. As Josephus says, it began at the Hippicus and ended at the western cloister of the Temple. The Temple itself, a huge equal-sided and strongly

[1] Josephus, *loc. cit.*

[2] Possibly what is now known as David's Tower, near the Jaffa Gate.

fortified area, stretched towards the north, its north-western angle being overlooked by the fortress of Antonia, where the Romans kept their watch. The north wall of the oldest city and the western wall of the Temple area formed what was practically a right angle. It was in this angle that, after the time of Solomon, a new city began to rise, and it was to protect this new quarter that Ezechias had to commence the construction of a new line of ramparts, the same as enclosed the city in the time of Christ.



The second wall, that of Ezechias, took its beginning at the Gennath Gate and reached as far as the tower of Antonia; so says Josephus, but his too short description of its course has given rise to two

alternative hypotheses.[1] According to some this wall proceeded northward from about the middle of the old north wall till it reached a point level with the Antonia, to which it then proceeded in a direction parallel to that of the earliest wall; this course is illustrated in the first sketch. Another hypothetical course, which has the support of de Saulcy, de Vogüé, Guérin, Ollivier, and Zanecchia, begins at the western end of the old fortifications quite near to Herod's palace (where the Gennath Gate may well have been situated); thence the wall proceeds northward for a distance equal to about a third of the total length of the Temple area; it then abruptly turns eastward, running parallel with the older wall until it reaches the Ephraim Gate, where it is again deflected in a northerly direction. On reaching the *Porta Antiqua* it turns towards the east, and in a slightly broken line proceeds in the direction of the Moriah, passing the Fish Gate, and terminating at the Antonia.

These hypotheses, which both exclude Golgotha from the precincts of the city, were for long hotly contested by writers of the Protestant school, such as the American Robinson, the Swiss Titus Tobler, and the Englishman Fergusson[2]; now, however, they are in their general outlines admitted by all, especially since the excavations conducted by Pierroti in 1859,

[1] [There is also a third hypothesis, which would include within the walls the traditional site of Golgotha, the principal argument of its upholders being the impossibility of otherwise accounting for the large population of Jerusalem at the time of the siege. See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, II. xiv. 3; VI. ix. 3. But we may point out that the wall-protected area was enlarged by Agrippa. Jos. *Ant.* XIX. vii. 2.—*Trans.*]

See the bibliography of this question in Martin, *op. cit.* p. 173, note 1.

and by de Vogüé in 1862, have brought to light a piece of ancient wall and a monumental gateway near the present hostelry for noble Russians.[1] Concerning the precise character of these remains there is indeed

some controversy; whilst de Vogüé considered them to be a fragment of the wall of Ezechias and of one of its gates, a Dominican of the convent of St. Stephen has since identified them, by means of a Cufic inscription, with a portico of Constantine's basilica.[2] But one point is clear: M. de Vogüé discovered among

[1] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 292.

[2] *Revue biblique*, 1897, p. 645.

the remains a quantity of ancient stone balls such as were used by the Romans in their sieges.[1] Their presence has been taken as showing that the Romans attacked this point with their siege machinery, and that hence we are here on the site of a wall.

Though Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nabuchodonozor, yet in the year 33 it was still the custom to speak of the wall of David and of the wall of Ezechias, because in their veneration for the past the Jews had rebuilt on their old foundation not only Ezechias's, but also David's wall.[2]

The little knoll of Calvary reared its head outside the city walls, in a corner of which the angle was occupied by the Ephraim Gate. The outer wall, says Josephus, was 25 cubits high (37½ feet), at intervals of 200 cubits it was strengthened by bastions 20 cubits square (30 feet), and which rose 20 cubits above the level of the walls. A flight of large stairs led to the summit of each tower; within there were lodgings, and cisterns to contain rain-water,[3] and at the foot a deep ditch. The wall of Ezechias was defended by fourteen such towers between the Gennath Gate and the Antonia. There is, however, little doubt that the description given by Josephus is exaggerated, and according to Father Zanecchia's plan the length of the wall should be reduced by about one-fourth.

The same writer computes that between the *Porta Antiqua* and the Ephraim Gate there was a distance of about 450 feet.[4] If this be correct, then the walls which bounded Golgotha on its southern and eastern

[1] Victor Guérin, *op. cit.* p. 79. [See a description of these projectiles, each a talent in weight, in Jos. *Wars*, V. vi. 3.—*Trans.*]

[2] 2 Esdras iii.

[3] Jos. *Wars*, V. iv. 3.

[4] *Op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 250, 251.

side would have measured altogether about 900 feet. On their other or north-western side the Holy Places were enclosed by the rising ground of Gareb. So near was Golgotha to the city walls that according to the fourth Gospel the title on the cross was "read by many of the Jews."[1] Father Didon is of opinion that the cross was not more than twenty paces away from the ditch which ran close under the ramparts.

Calvary was simply a little rocky eminence which arose naked amidst the surrounding gardens. Its name has been variously accounted for. Some think that it originated in a resemblance between the naked rock and the head of a bald man, *calvus*;[2] others in the fact that this was the spot used for capital punishment;[3] others explain the name by means of a Jewish tradition, according to which in Solomon's time a skull had been found in a cleft in the rock, and had, on the strength of certain magic disclosures, been described by Solomon as Adam's skull.[4] Hence the name of Calvary, or in Hebrew Golgotha—*i.e.* the place of the skull.[5]

Fouard[6] notes that, according to St. Jerome and numerous other interpreters, the name arose through

[1] Jn. xix. 20.

[2] Thus Ollivier compares it to the name Chaumont, by which so many hills in France are designated. *Op. cit.* p. 359, note 1.

[3] *e.g.* Friedlieb-Martin, *op. cit.* p. 172.

[4] Basil of Seleucia, *Orat.* xxxviii. 3 (*P.G.* lxxxv. 410). See the legend more fully described in L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 83.

[5] Τόπος τοῦ κρανίου. [To pilgrims a cave in the rock of Calvary, now within the Holy Sepulchre Church, is still pointed out as "Adam's Grotto." For yet another view, identifying Golgotha with the *Goatha* of Jeremias (xxxi. 39), see Krafft, *Topographie Jerusalems*, pp. 158-170.—*Trans.*]

[6] *Vie de Jésus*, 12th ed. vol. ii. p. 365, note 1. [English trans. by Griffith, *The Christ the Son of God.* Longmans, 1891.]

the skulls of the condemned being left to bleach on the spot where they had been done to death,[1] but were this the case the word ought to be in the plural number; Golgotha means not "skulls," but "the skull," or as Luke translates it, *κρανίον*. It is also incorrect to translate Golgotha as "the bald mount," for Calvary comes from the noun *Calvaria*, which signifies a skull, and not from the adjective *calvus*, meaning "bald."

De Vogüé[2] has constructed a plan which is very generally followed. According to him Calvary was a kind of a double cliff[3] standing a few yards from the wall of Ezechias, and with its crests pointing towards the north. One of these hillocks, some fifteen feet in height, was the scene of the crucifixion, the other contained the garden and sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa.[4]

It is probable that a road led from the Gennath Gate and, after winding between Calvary and the Gareb quarter, went off in the direction of Samaria,[5] and that this highway was to the north of Calvary joined by other roads leading from the Ephraim Gate and from the *Porta Antiqua*. In those days the unevenness of the ground was much more pronounced than it is at present. Father Germer-Durand, summing up the results of the latest excavations,

[1] This view is incorrect; the Jews were accustomed to bury the bodies of the condemned together with the instruments of death.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 126.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 25. *Cp.* Cabrol, *Étude sur la peregrinatio Silviæ*, p. 7, and Plate 1 on p. 202.

[4] The crest of Calvary would thus rise to about half the height of the neighbouring city wall.

[5] Didon, *Jésus Christ*, vol. ii. p. 336, note 1. [English translation, *Jesus Christ, a Biography.* Kegan Paul, 1891.]

says[1]: "Calvary is but one of a series of hills on which Jerusalem is built, a slight elevation on a slope rising gradually towards the west. This hill, which was once abrupt and separated from the town by a deep moat, now rises barely fifteen feet above the present artificial level [*i.e.* the floor of the Holy Sepulchre Church]; to reach the old level we should have to dig at least thirty feet into the accumulated rubbish on which the surrounding buildings stand. The depression in which Calvary was situated, and which it is now so difficult for us to realise, was doubtless at the time of Christ even more accentuated than it should have been naturally; it had no doubt been deepened in order to serve as a part of the moat defending the second wall. But when Adrian rebuilt Jerusalem he was led to level this spot in order to be able to build thereon a pagan temple."

Calvary was surrounded by gardens, in which, in accordance with Jewish custom, the inhabitants had built their graves. Father Gargarin adds[2]: "A screen of rocks some twenty feet high, of which the crest now coincides with the surface of the 'Christians' Street' in the immediate neighbourhood of the Holy Sepulchre Church, contained many sepulchres carved out of the rock, and evidently of Jewish origin. One of these sepulchres is still in existence, and is known as that of Joseph of Arimathæa.[3] It is thus

[1] *La Basilique du S. Sépulcre*, in *Revue biblique*, 1896, p. 322.

[2] *Le S. Sépulcre et la topographie de Jérusalem*, in the *Études*, 1868, p. 692.

[3] Who apparently possessed two sepulchres. The first, which was constructed to contain several bodies, must have been already full when Joseph built the "new sepulchre" in which Christ was buried. See Clermont-Ganneau, *L'authenticité du S. Sépulcre et le tombeau de Joseph d' Arimathée*: Paris. Leroux, 1877. [The entrance to the so-called Tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa is in the Holy Sepulchre Church.—*Trans.*]

evident that just here there existed a cemetery, of which the Holy Sepulchre, and probably also the tomb of the priest John mentioned by Josephus, formed a part."

We must beware of thinking that, because it contained tombs, this spot was as cheerless and forsaken as are our modern graveyards; the very fact that Calvary was chosen to be the place of Christ's death proves it to have been a much frequented spot.[1] Both Romans and Jews followed the custom described by Quintilian: "Whenever we execute criminals we select a spot to which people resort, in order that many may witness, and be impressed by, the carrying out of the sentence." This was the reason which induced the ancients to choose the town gates as the place of execution.[2] The Damascus, Jaffa, and Gaza roads began at the *Porta Antiqua*. Travellers, pilgrims, tourists, and merchants constantly passed the place on their way to or from the city, and the tents pitched round about by the pilgrims at the time of the festival must have added largely to the usual activity of the neighbourhood.[3] The road from Sion to its suburbs also passed near this spot. From the walls it was possible, through the cleft between Calvary and the city ramparts, to catch a glimpse of the new houses of Bezetha and of the villas and gardens on Gareb, where there grew the vivid green, close-set hedges of the *Zizyphus spina Christi*, the traditional material out of which was made the crown of thorns.[4]

[1] Friedlieb-Martin, *op. et loc. cit.*

[2] Cicero, *In Verrem*, vi. 66; Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 360; Hebrews, xiii. 12.

[3] Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 368.

[4] F. de Mély, *La Couronne d'épines* (*Revue de l'art chrétien*), 1900, p. 218. [The *zizyphus* belongs to the buckthorn tribe; in ancient times it probably served the purpose for which now the *cactus opuntia* is used.—*Trans.*]

According to certain traditions collected by St. Jerome, by Venerable Bede, and the pilgrim Ernoul[1] (A.D. 1231), Calvary was the spot where executions commonly took place. St. Cyril, however, holds the opposite view. Father Ollivier thus sums up the reasons against the former opinion[2]: "Calvary does not seem to have been the usual place of execution, though the shape would have fitted it to serve as such. The Jews were wont to lead the condemned to a high cliff, from which they might be thrown. The executioners stood below, and when the body fell, if it still showed signs of life, they finished the work by dashing rocks upon it.[3] With regard to those crucified, they were put to death by the wayside, the main preoccupation of the authorities being to make their death an example to others. But this was more a Roman than a Jewish custom, so that the Jews probably left the arrangements to the soldiers of the Procurator." St. Stephen was probably stoned elsewhere; it is true that the *Acts of the Apostles* does not describe the spot,[4] but we know from the Fathers that the basilica in his honour was erected on the place of his martyrdom,[5] and from the pilgrim Theodosius (sixth century) we learn that this spot was some 300 yards to the north of the Galilean Gate.[6]

[1] Et pour çou apele on cel mont Mont de Calvaire, c'on i faisoit les iustices et çou que li lois aportoit, et c'on i escauvoit les membres c'on leur iugeoit à perdre (*l'Estat de la citez de Jherusalem*), in Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires à Jérusalem*, Geneva: Fick, 1882, p. 37.

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 368-369.

[3] *Sanhedrim*, iv. and v.; Stapfer, *Palestine*, p. 112.

[4] vii. 57—viii. 2.

[5] Basil of Seleucia (*P.G.* lxxxv. 469); Evagrius (Migne, *P.G.* lxxxvi. col. 2483). [The new church of the Dominicans is stated to occupy the site of the early basilica.—*Trans.*]

[6] Sanctus Stephanus foris portam Galilææ lapidatus est. Ibi et

Perhaps it would be well to make a distinction between the Jewish custom of stoning, for which no special place was assigned, and the Roman custom of crucifying, for which the usual spot may have been Golgotha. The holes to contain the feet of the crosses must have been chiselled out of the rock, and it is scarcely likely that they were made anew for each man condemned to die by crucifixion. If in the case of Christ it had been necessary to make such a hole, the Passion would have lasted much longer than it did. If this view be correct, then the noble Jews of knightly rank whom in 64 Florus scourged and then condemned to death were probably crucified on the same spot which had been chosen for Christ.[1]

2. THE VIA DOLOROSA

The *Via Dolorosa* is the road followed by Christ when proceeding from Pilate's hall to Golgotha. St. John is the only Evangelist who gives any details—and such as they are they are insufficient—of the building in which sentence was passed on Christ. The chiefs of the Jews led Christ to the governor's hall, but "they went not into the hall that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Pasch."[2] A Jew by entering a pagan house became unclean until the evening.[3] Pilate accordingly went out to them,[4] and asked them: "What accusation bring you against this man?" After hearing their complaints he left them, and returning to the hall[5] he called Jesus before

ecclesia ejus est (*De Terra Sancta*; Titus Tobler, *Itinera et descriptiones Terræ Sanctæ*, Geneva: Fick, 1877, p. 66).

[1] Jos. *Wars*, II. xiv. 9.
[2] Jn. xviii. 28.
[3] Martin, *op. cit.* p. 128.
[4] Jn. xviii. 29.
[5] Jn. xviii. 33.

him. After having given utterance to his well-known exclamation: "What is truth?" he left Jesus, and again went out[1] to ask the Jews whom they would prefer, Jesus or Barabbas. On the crowd taking up the cry "Barabbas" the governor re-entered the hall, and after having scourged Christ went out a third time[2] to tell the Jews that in his opinion the accused man was innocent. At his heels there came Jesus Himself, crowned with thorns, and wearing a purple robe. Pilate pointed to his prisoner, and spoke the words: "Behold the man," *Ecce Homo*; but the Jews were obdurate, and only cried: "Crucify him, crucify him." Pilate, disquieted by their behaviour, again returned to the hall,[3] and questioned Jesus for the last time; outside the people were clamouring: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Then the ambition of the magistrate getting the better of his sense of justice,[4] he again "brought Jesus forth, and sat down on the judgment-seat in the place which is called *Lithostrotos*[5] in Greek, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha."[6]

This narrative presupposes that the governor's hall or prætorium opened on to a paved public place; Pilate is described as going in and out so frequently that it seems he had only a few steps to take. The spot where Pilate had the desk or pulpit, *bema*,[7] set

[1] Jn. xviii. 38.

[2] Jn. xix. 4.

[3] Jn. xix. 9.

[4] Jn. xix. 13.

[5] This word signifies a pavement. It is composed of λίθος, a stone, and στρώννυμι, to strew. Martin, *op. cit.* p. 131, note 6, translates it by "mosaic."

[6] Meaning a high place. [See Pilate's after-history in L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 175 *ff.* The story goes that he committed suicide on the mountain near Lucern which bears his name.—*Trans.*]

[7] Βῆμα. Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 219; Martin, *op. cit.* p. 131.

up, in which, sitting on the *sella*[1] or judgment-seat he was to pass sentence, must have been an open space of considerable size, since there was room in it for the crowd of Jews, and also for a cohort of soldiers.

The tradition commonly followed by pilgrims locates the prætorium in the fortress of Antonia, where the legionaries were quartered. Risings were constantly taking place among the Jews, and it is conceivable that the governor, realising the danger of living in the city, had taken up his abode and established his court inside the walls of the stronghold. According to this tradition the Antonia was approached by the *Scala Sancta*, whilst some ninety yards away was the arch in solid masonry, the *Ecce Homo* arch, from which Pilate is supposed to have exhibited to the mob the Son of Man.[2]

The real starting-point of the *Via Dolorosa* is now a subject of much discussion. The first to fall was the authenticity of the arch. It is in disagreement with the Gospel narrative; according to St. John "Pilate therefore went forth, and said to them, Behold I bring him forth unto you that you may know that I find no cause in him (Jesus therefore came forth bearing his crown of thorns and the purple garment), and he said to them, Behold your king."[3] The scene is here clearly described. Pilate goes out of the hall on to the Lithostrotos, Jesus slowly follows him, and as soon as He too has reached the open space, the governor presents Him to the people. Hence we should be flying in the face of the text were we to locate the *Ecce Homo* scene ninety yards farther off, on the summit of an arch—*i.e.* on a first

[1] Ollivier, *ibid.* [2] Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 334.
[3] Jn. xix. 5.

storey—when St. John simply records that "Pilate went forth."

Worse still, we should be showing ourselves ignorant of the details given by Josephus concerning the siege in A.D. 70. Titus, first of all, gained possession of the Antonia, and then razed it in order to make a ready passage for his army to come up, and a platform on which he might place his engines of war to hurl destruction at the Temple.[1] It seems impossible that a building such as this arch could have remained standing at this point after the levelling operations, and the military works undertaken by Titus.

Archæology, finally, has ruined the basis of the tradition. De Saulcy was one of the first to come to the conclusion that the arch, though of Roman construction, was put up after 33.[2] De Vogüé, however, hesitated to pronounce any opinion until he was forced to de Saulcy's conclusion by a new discovery.[3] The edifice is now proved to be of more recent date even than the second century; it did not even form a part of the original *Ælia Capitolina*, for two stones forming part of the vault were found to bear the name of Aurelius, and Greek characters betraying a third-century origin. George Langherrand, a mayor of Mons, who made his pilgrimage about the year of grace 1485, was not far wrong when he described this construction as "a stone arch, crossing the street, and built by St. Helena."[4]

De Vogüé, Guérin,[5] and Ollivier[6] relinquished the

[1] Jos. *Wars*, VI. ii. 1. [2] De Saulcy, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 112.

[3] De Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, p. 125.

[4] Une arcure de pierres qui traverse la rue, laquelle fict faire saincte Hélainne.

[5] Guérin, *op. cit.* p. 115.

[6] Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 112 and p. 233.

tradition of the arch, but they still maintained the exactitude of the tradition which makes the *Via Dolorosa* to begin at the *Antonia*. According to de Vogüé this tradition is correct in this sense, that the Antonia being the abode of the Roman procurator, the scourging at the pillar and the *Ecce Homo* scene must have taken place in the vicinity, and possibly on the very spots assigned to them by tradition.

Was the nature of the fortress such as to agree with the data of the fourth Gospel? The Antonia is known to us by the description Josephus gives of it. "The tower of Antonia was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the Temple, of that on the west, and of that on the north; it was erected upon a rock fifty cubits in height, and was on a great precipice; it was the work of King Herod. . . . In the first place, the rock itself was covered over with smooth pieces of stone from its foundation, both for ornament and that anyone who would either try to get up or to go down it might not be able to keep his feet upon it."[1]

These details spoil the argument adduced by the latest defender of the identity of the prætorium with the fortress, an argument which this able writer bases on an incident in the siege of 70. The Romans were being forced back into the Antonia by the Jews, when Julian, a centurion of great strength and pluck, put himself in a position to cover his comrades' retreat, but with unfortunate results for himself; "for as he had shoes studded with thick nails, as had every one of the other soldiers, when he ran on the pavement of the Temple he slipped, and fell down on his back, making a great clatter with his armour."[2] The

[1] Jos. *Wars*, V. v. 8.

[2] Jos. *op. cit.* VI. i. 8.

Abbé Fouard[1] thus explains this passage of Josephus: "The historian depicts a centurion rushing from the Antonia to drive back the Jews towards the Temple and slipping on the pavement of the *Lithostrotos*. It follows then that this was an open space between the fortress and the Temple." But this argument is based on a false assumption. Josephus does not give us the name of the place, nor was it on the stone pavement of the *Lithostrotos*, but rather on the smooth stones which defended the approaches to the Antonia, that the Roman officer slipped, and, in the event, found his death.

The fortress was square in shape, each side being about 300 feet long,[2] and at each angle it was strengthened by bastions, three of which were 50 cubits in height, whilst the fourth, that at the south-eastern extremity, was higher (70 cubits), so that from it the Roman sentinels enjoyed a view of the whole Temple precincts. At the corner where it joined the Temple, continues Josephus, it had passages, down which on the Jewish festivals the guard could go well armed right into the sacred enclosure, and so keep an eye on the movements of the people lest they should attempt any innovation. On its east, north, and west sides the stronghold was encircled by a moat, the *Struthion*, which was really a prolongation of the pools outside. It could only be approached from the south-west, probably by a drawbridge giving access to the open space between the city walls and the Temple.

Now just as we cannot by any possibility situate St. John's *Lithostrotos* on the slippery, slanting, marble approaches to the Antonia, so neither can

[1] Fouard, *Vie de Jésus Christ*, 12th ed. vol. ii. p. 338, note 2.

[2] Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 214.

we admit that his allusion is to the open space just mentioned; for certainly the door of the judgment-hall did not open directly on to this place, yet in order to preserve the true sense of the words used by St. John the judgment-hall must have communicated directly with some large public place, otherwise we cannot explain how Pilate repeatedly went and came. Had the governor, each time he went out, to traverse the castle court and the postern gate, St. John could scarcely have avoided making some allusion to the fortress.

Nor is it one whit better to say that the *Lithostrotos* was the inner court of the fortress, and that the reddish tiles which have been brought to light in the basement of the convent of Sion are its remains. In the first instance, an ornamental staircase of twenty-eight steps (the *Scala Sancta* now at Rome) would have proved an incumbrance in such a court.[1]

Again to enter the inner court, the Jews would have had to cross the threshold of the building, an act which would have made them as unclean ceremonially as if they had actually entered the court of justice. Yet again the governor would certainly have thought twice before allowing the Jews to enter the fortress, of which the garrison—six hundred men strong—would easily have been surprised and overcome by a crowd numbering probably several thousand.[2]

[1] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 345-346; Ollivier, *op. cit.* pp. 217-219. [There is, however, as Mgr. Ward remarks in *The Edmundian* (Supplement, July 1904, p. 29), "considerable reason for doubting that the *Scala Sancta* is what it professes to be. No mention of it can be found before the fifteenth century."—*Trans.*]

[2] At Jerusalem there was only one cohort. A cohort consisted of three maniples, and a maniple comprised two hundred men and two centurions. We must make allowance too for a certain number of sick and non-combatants.

Struck by these difficulties, Friedlieb[1] suggested that Pilate, when at Jerusalem, lived in one of Herod's palaces not far from the Antonia; in this Friedlieb adopts an opinion which was common from the time of the Crusades to the Renaissance. An Assumptionist[2] writes as follows:—"From the end of the twelfth century a persistent tradition located Pilate's prætorium near the Antonia, on Bezetha; but at first, it did not identify the prætorium with the still visible[3] ruins of the celebrated castle, but preferred to locate the prætorium and the Antonia on opposite sides of the road.[4] As late as 1584 Adrichomius still believed that the prætorium and the Antonia were separate buildings. The former he located north of the *Ecce Homo* arch, the latter south of the same arch—*i.e.* near the Temple. Ultimately, in the seventeenth century, the two were identified, and now no pilgrim seeks for traces of the prætorium outside of the area now belonging to the Turkish barracks."

Father Zanecchia[5] goes still further, and proves that even the tradition which locates the prætorium in the neighbourhood of the Antonia is an innovation, and that originally—*i.e.* before the Crusades—the traditional site of the prætorium was in the Tyropœon valley, below the Temple. The Bordeaux pilgrim visited Jerusalem in 333.[6] Starting from the *Cœna-*

[1] Martin, *op. cit.* p. 124.

[2] *Huit jours à Jérusalem*, p. 61.

[3] *Cp.* Theoderic, 1172.

[4] *Cp.* some of the good MSS. of the *Estat de la citez de Jherusalem*, 1187-1261. Marino Sanuto, 1309-1320; d'Anglure, 1395; and an anonymous work of 1480 published by Schæfer.

[5] *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 349.

[6] [See in L. de Combes (*De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 205 *f.*) how some of the Fathers condemned pilgrimages as demoralising.—*Trans.*]

culum in the south of the city he thus describes the respective positions of the judgment-hall and of Calvary: "From thence (the *Cœnaculum*) whosoever proceeds towards the Neapolitana Gate[1] perceives, on his right hand, at the bottom of the valley, the walls of the house, or prætorium, of Pontius Pilate, where our Lord was questioned before He suffered; and on the left hand Golgotha, where the Lord was crucified."[2]

Father Zanecchia who, with this text in his hand, has observed the locality, thus sets his view on record[3]: "We may infer from this precious testimony that in 333 there existed in Jerusalem a tradition which fixed the prætorium at the bottom of the valley. It therefore was neither in the Antonia, nor near the modern *Ecce Homo* church, nor near the chapel which now commemorates the scourging at the pillar, for all these edifices stand, not in the valley, but on the brow of the Moriah. . . . The same pilgrim attests that when coming down from Sion by the street which leads to the Neapolitana—*i.e.* Nablus or Damascus Gate—the traveller would reach a certain spot whence he could perceive on the right the prætorium in a valley, and to the left the hill of Calvary. Now if we follow the road pointed out, when we have passed the Mooristan we find Calvary [the Holy Sepulchre Church] to the left, and, to the

[1] *i.e.* the Nablus or Damascus Gate in the north of the city.

[2] Inde . . . eunti ad portam neapolitanam ad partem dextram, *deorsum in valle*, sunt parietes ubi domus fuit sive pretorium Pontii Pilati. Ibi Dominus auditus est antequam pateretur. A sinistra autem est monticulus Golgotha, ubi Dominus crucifixus est. *Itinerarium a Burdigala Hierusalem usque*, Tobler, p. 18. [For a completely different, and not very probable, interpretation of this text, see Fergusson *op. cit.* p. 92.—*Trans.*]

[3] *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 351.

right, the Mehkemeh depression. It was consequently here that Pilate had his prætorium."[1]

Two centuries and a half after the visit of the Bordeaux pilgrim, Antoninus of Piacenza[2] writes as follows:—"We prayed in the prætorium where the Lord was questioned. There stands the basilica of St. Sophia in front of the ruins of Solomon's Temple; under this place the water makes its way to the spring of Siloe, near Solomon's porch. In the basilica is the seat on which Pilate sat when he interrogated the Lord, and also a square stone which used to be in the middle of the prætorium. On it the Lord stood whilst being questioned by Pilate, in order that He might be heard and seen by all the people.[3] This stone has preserved the print of His feet."[4] Antoninus also found here something still more valuable, a portrait of Christ; but instead of giving us a detailed description of this unique treasure, he contents himself with the baldest possible account of it: "The painting depicts a man with a fine foot, both small and narrow, of middle height, with a kindly face

[1] [*i.e.* somewhere in the neighbourhood of the present seraglio.—*Trans.*]

[2] Antoninus Martyr is a fictitious personage. The writer of this itinerary is an unknown inhabitant of Piacenza. See Bellanger, *In Antonini Placentini itinerarium grammatica disquisitio.* Paris: Fontemoing, 1902. Paul Lejay, *Revue critique*, 1904, i. p. 32. [Author's rectification in list of *errata*, printed subsequently to his second work *de l'invention à l'exaltation de la Sainte Croix.* Paris, 1903.—*Trans.*]

[3] An error, as the people did not enter the judgment-hall.

[4] Et oravimus in pretorio ubi auditus est Dominus, et modo est basilica Sancte Sophie. Ante ruinas templi Salomonis, sub platea, aqua decurrit ad fontem Siloam, secus porticum Salomonis. *De Locis Sanctis quæ perambulavit Antoninus Martyr*, xxiii.; Tobler, *op. cit.* p. 104.

and curled hair, with beautiful hands and slender fingers."[1]

We may find that the portrait lacks detail; but the description of the church of St. Sophia,[2] and especially of the stream which runs down the slope towards the pool of Siloe, is so clear as to enable us to dispense entirely with the other arguments adduced by Father Zanecchia in favour of the view which locates the prætorium in the valley. This view still held its own after the Arab invasion of Palestine.[3] The *Breviarius de Hierosolyma* likewise situates the prætorium on the spot occupied by the basilica of St. Sophia.[4] Theodosius excludes the claim of the Antonia by his statement that only 100 paces separate the prætorium from the palace of Caiphas.[5] A like statement was made in 1106 by the Russian abbot Daniel, who writes thus: "Close by this door is shown the spot where St. Helena recognised the True Cross, which was the means of restoring a deceased virgin to life. A little way off, towards the east, is the prætorium where the soldiers led Jesus to Pilate."[6]

[1] Pedem pulchrum, modicum, subtilem, staturam communem, faciem pulchram, capillos subanellatos, manum formosam, digitos longos imago designat, que, illo vivente, picta et posita est in ipso pretorio, *ibid.* [On the various so-called portraits of Christ which were current in early ages, see L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 181 *ff.*].

[2] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 353.

[3] F. de Mély, *la Sainte Lance*, has proved that the *Breviarius de Hierosolyma* and the *de Terra Sancta*, both of Theodosius, belong not to A.D. 530, as Tobler states, but to a period subsequent to the Arab invasion. *Revue de l'art chrétien*, 1897.

[4] Tobler, *op. cit.* p. 59.

[5] De domo Caiphe usque ad pretorium Pilati passus numero C. *De Terra Sancta*, vii; Tobler *op. cit.* p. 65.

[6] *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, French trans. by Mme. de Khitrowo, Geneva: Fick, 1889, p. 18.

The opinion to which Zanecchia came, working at the convent of St. Stephen, was favourably received by archæologists, and was adopted also in the neighbouring monastery of Notre-Dame-de-France.[1] At the present day no Catholic scholar living in Jerusalem hesitates in dismissing the view that Pilate's prætorium was in the Antonia.[2]

We may mention that during the Crusades, in the twelfth century, yet another tradition made its appearance. It is now impossible to say on what data it was based, but one thing is certain, Fretellus, archdeacon of Toulouse in 1148, John of Würzburg in 1165, Epiphanius in 1170, all located the prætorium on Sion, near David's tower or the Hippicus.[3] But this tradition soon fell, and in the following century, Christians having been banished from the city, pilgrims, left to their own fancies, gradually came to posite the prætorium nearer and nearer the Antonia[4] until finally the two sites were confounded.

From the bottom of the valley a rugged but short street led to the Ephraim Gate. It is this same street which is associated with the *Via Dolorosa* even by modern tradition.[5] Concerning the right position

[1] *Huit jours à Jérusalem*, p. 64.

[2] [That the above reasons have not sufficed to convert all is apparent from Coppens, *The Palace of Caiphas*. English translation by Egan. London : Burns & Oates, 1904, p. 52 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

[3] *Huit jours*, p. 64; Martin, *op. cit.* Appendix iii. p. 239.

[4] See the old French *Itinéraires à Jérusalem et descriptions de la Terre Sainte* of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, edited by H. Michelant et Gaston Raynaud, 1882; p. 49, Ernoul (A.D. 1231), *Estat de la citez de Jherusalem*, xxii. p. 114, P. Mousket, *Description rimée des Lieux Saints*, verses 10648 *ff.*; and the anonymous continuation of William of Tyre's account, xxii. (A.D. 1261), p. 161.

[5] Didon, *Vie de Jésus*, vol. ii. pp. 355-356.

of the first seven stations of the Cross there is no certainty whatever. At the Ephraim Gate (eighth station) Christ is said to have met the Daughters of Jerusalem.[1] A few paces farther[2] we reach Calvary. The procession to the place of execution has been admirably depicted by Father Ollivier. At the head of the band marched a herald sounding his trumpet and proclaiming the guilt of the condemned; then came the centurion who was charged with the execution, *exactor mortis* as Tacitus[3] describes him. This last had, so far as we know, no inkling of the testimony he was so soon to give[4] to the Divinity of his prisoner, nor any thought that he was later on to shed his blood as a disciple of the man he had put to death. The Church keeps his feast in March.[5] Tradition assigns to him the name of Longinus, which he shares in common with the soldier who opened Christ's side with a spear. Mary of Agreda[6] opined that his name was really Quintus Cornelius. Possibly he may be the real Petronius, whose name has been preserved by the very ancient, though apocryphal, Gospel of St. Peter.[7] The trophies of

[1] Lk. xxiii. 28.

[2] [The last five stations are within the Holy Sepulchre Church. —*Trans.*]

[3] *Annals*, iii. 14.

[4] "This man was indeed the Son of God"—Mk. xv. 39; Mt. xxvii. 54.

[5] *Acta SS.* 15th March. *De S. Longino milite et S. Longino centurione.*

[6] [The writer of the *Mystic City of God.* She died in 1675. —*Trans.*]

[7] Translated by Jacquier, *Université catholique de Lyon*, 1893, p. 11. The gospel in question states that a centurion, Petronius, was deputed to guard the sepulchre (v. 31). But as the sepulchre was sealed by the Jews, apparently without the help of the legionaries, it seems more probable that Petronius had charge of the execution.

the battalion were not, as was elsewhere usually the case, carried in the procession; out of regard for the religious scruples of the Jews, who considered them idolatrous,[1] the Roman standards were never displayed in Jerusalem.[2]

Pilate's rank was not such as to permit him the use of lictors; his soldiers had to act as executioners.[3] The half maniple, which served in the case of Christ, must have belonged to the twelfth legion (*duodecima gemina*), which was then garrisoned at Cæsarea, and which was later on to become the famous *Legio fulminata*,[4] and to shed its blood for the sake of the very same man whom it had been instrumental in crucifying. The soldiers wore the iron breastplate and the chestnut-coloured tunic, by which they were easily distinguishable from the Hebrews in their white woollen clothing and dark cloaks. At the heels of the centurion came a legionary bearing on a pole a wooden tablet, with the cause of the sentence inscribed in red on a white ground.[5] Jesus came next; His purple robe had been removed,[6] and He wore the white garment presented Him by Herod,[7] His black cloak and His leathern girdle.[8] The crown of thorns had been taken

[1] The legions worshipped the imperial eagles as gods.

[2] Jos. *Wars*, II. ix. 2.

[3] A reason given by Tertullian why Christians should not be soldiers (*De Corona mil.* 11).

[4] [See Allard, English trans., *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London: Kegan Paul, p.32.—*Trans.*]

[5] Præcedente titulo qui causam pœnæ indicavit. Suetonius, *Caligula*, 32.

[6] Mt. xxvii. 31.

[7] Lk. xxiii. 11.

[8] This leather girdle is said to be preserved at Aachen. The ends are sealed together with Constantine's seal. R. de Fleury, *Mémoire sur les instruments de la Passion*, p. 259.

off,[1] and will only be replaced on His head when He is being fixed to the cross. Possibly His head was covered with the traditional cap and kufieh[2] to obviate the danger of sunstroke, which in His weak state was much to be feared. In Veronica's picture He is depicted with His eyes half closed, His face covered with the vile spittle of the Jews, and with the blood dripping from the wounds in His forehead on to His seamless coat.[3]

Simon the Cyrenean, whose aid had doubtless been sought after Jesus' first fall, carried the Cross between the two thieves, who having been less hardly treated, were still strong enough to carry theirs. The centurion, the title-bearer, Christ, Simon, and the thieves walked between two files of legionaries, lance on shoulder, whilst the rest of the half maniple brought up the rear, the soldiers marching six to the rank.[4]

The Sanhedrists too occupied their official positions. It was to them that Pilate had delivered Jesus; it was they who, in theory at least, as the representatives of the Hebrew judiciary, were leading their victim to the place of slaughter.[5] They were there, writes Father Ollivier, because they wished to enjoy their triumph to the fullest, cantering in front of the

[1] According to the picture on Veronica's kerchief. Ollivier, *op. cit.* pp. 356, 357. [For the subsequent history of the Crown of Thorns, see L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 138 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

[2] [A kind of kerchief worn about the head and face as a protection against the sun, dust, and flies.—*Trans.*]

[3] [The Veronica image is first recorded in the seventh century. See L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* pp. 185-186. The name Veronica seems to be a corruption of Berenice. See *ibid.* p. 182.—*Trans.*]

[4] Jos. *Wars*, III. vi. 2; V. ii. 1.

[5] "And as they (the Jews) led him away . . ."—Lk. xxiii. 26. "And they (the Jews) took Jesus and led him forth"—Jn. xix. 16.

people on their richly comparisoned white mules,[1] seeking and enjoying the acclamations of the populace. In her vision Sister Emmerich thought she could descry them following close in the wake of the soldiers. Lastly came the rabble—a great multitude of people[2]—such a one as can always be brought together by the tramp of soldiers marching through a town.

From the Ephraim Gate to the *Porta Antiqua*, respectively the southern and northern extremities of the Holy Places, the distance was about 150 yards. The procession having passed through the Ephraim Gate proceeded northward. On their right there was the broad moat, and the city walls rising 25 cubits, whilst on their left Calvary rose some 15 feet above them.[3] After having passed the opening of the great cistern, which was soon to become the depository of the True Cross, the procession, according to a very recent tradition, made a first stop. Here, it is said,Christ again began to carry His cross. In 1395 a stone was pointed out to Baron d'Anglure as marking the exact spot where Simon laid down his load.[4] A few paces farther on they came to the northernmost extremity of the escarpment; here they turned to the left, and halted whilst the soldiers made ready for the execution. Near by there was a vaulted chamber,[5] and in it Jesus and the thieves were in-

[1] The mule is, in the East, an animal reserved for great men, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Ollivier, *op. cit.* pp. 347, 348; 2 Kings xviii. 9; 3 Kings i. 33, etc.

[2] Lk. xxiii. 27.

[3] See the section of Calvary in Rohault de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 285. [See a slightly different pictorial reconstruction of the site in *La Palestine, guide historique et pratique*, Paris, 1904, p. 67.—*Trans.*]

[4] Ollivier, *op. cit.* p. 370, note 2.
Guérin, *Jérusalem*, p. 139.

terned. The Ambassador Deshaye thus describes it in his report to Louis XIII.[1]: "Continuing our stroll round the Holy Sepulchre Church we found a little vaulted chapel, seven feet long by six feet wide, which is sometimes called the Prison of Christ, because He was put into it whilst waiting for a hole to be made in which the foot of the cross might be put.[2] This chapel is exactly opposite Calvary, so that the two places form, as it were, the transept of the church, the Mount being to the south and the chapel to the north."[3]

At last the fatal moment came, and Christ was drawn out of His dungeon, stripped of His vesture, crowned with thorns, and again made to carry His cross. The procession now entered the little ravine—which was Joseph of Arimathæa's garden, and lay between the two horns of the Mount—and marching southward, it ascended Golgotha.

M. Rohault de Fleury,[4] making use of information which he had obtained from Father Hornung, a priest of Notre-Dame de Sion,[5] thus describes the road followed: "On arriving at the foot of Calvary a turn was made in the north, and then another to the west; then by proceeding southward they reached the spot which is now the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre Church, which, in order doubtless to accommodate itself to a tradition, occupies the exact

[1] This report is reprinted in Chateaubriand's famous *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem.*

[2] We have already stated that in our opinion the hole was permanent.

[3] [This chapel still exists in the Holy Sepulchre Church; it, however, receives little notice from the Latins.—*Trans.*]

[4] *Mém.* pp. 285, 286.

[5] Conveyed in a letter dated 7th February 1867, and printed in de Fleury's *Mém.*, p. 341.

position where the procession stood on reaching the top of Calvary. The crosses were no doubt laid on the ground, with their heads pointing to the south, so that they might be erected at the very edge of the cliff. In this position they would be easily seen from below, for though of no great length, they were far above the level of the ground below."

This little reconstruction of the scene is historically highly probable, but we freely concede that several points are not absolutely certain; some, in fact, have been very acutely criticised. Thus many fair-minded archæologists consider the Prison of Christ to be fictitious. However this may be, three localisations seem well-grounded—that of Calvary, that of the sepulchre, and that of the cistern of the crosses. Taking into consideration the old conformation of the ground surface and the topography of Golgotha, the route which we have sketched must necessarily have been followed.[1]

[1] As a curiosity, see the narrative of Catherine Emmerich, *The Dolorous Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.* London: Burns & Oates, 1896. The soldiers who had crucified Christ and the thieves are supposed to have been replaced by a fresh troop of fifty men. "These were under the command of Abenadar, an Arab by birth, baptised by the name of Ctesiphon. The second officer was called Cassius, and afterwards received the name of Longinus. He frequently acted as messenger to Pilate." These details would have merely the value of any other vision were it not for one remarkable point. In 1595 there was discovered at Granada an assortment of relics, manuscripts, and leaden tablets, in which it was possible to read the names of Ctesiphon and Hiscius, disciples of James the Greater. The tablets stated that Ctesiphon had been called Abenadar before his conversion, and that he had written a book in Arabic. See the French translation of Catherine Emmerich, ed. Retaux, p. 272, note. Our readers may accept what they please in these documents, which, of course, have no pretence of being historical.

3. THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

"Now there was in the place, where he was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein no man as yet had been laid."[1] This garden was the property of Joseph, a native of Arimathæa, a member of the Sanhedrim, and a secret follower of Christ;[2] a man apparently held in universal esteem on account of his kindness and the righteousness of his life.[3] From the Gospel's description of the place it would seem that Joseph's property covered the western side of Calvary, and that its palms and olive-trees, its patches of flowering plants and sweet herbs, reached the very top of the Mount. At the bottom of the declivity, hidden in the shrubbery, was the tomb hewn in the rock, at a distance of about 150 feet from the spot where the cross had been erected.[4] Thither Joseph, Nicodemus, and the disciples carried the body of Christ after having embalmed it. "The tomb itself," writes Father Didon,[5] "comprised a double grotto; in the first, a kind of ante-chamber or mortuary chapel, the relatives could come to weep for the departed; in the second, or inner chamber, was laid the corpse. The tomb, properly so called, was a slightly hollowed-out bench of stone covered by a kind of vault or arcosolium." That the tomb was a double one of this kind is averred by Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, whom we may

[1] Jn. xix. 41.

[2] "A disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews"—Jn. xix. 38.

[3] "A counsellor, a good and just man"—Lk. xxiii. 50.

[4] R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 286.

[5] *Vie de Jésus,* vol. ii. p. 348; Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 280; Guérin, *Jérusalem,* p. 120.

reckon as a contemporary of the finding of the Holy Places, since he must have been already a youth in 327.[1] Renan is therefore wrong in denying the existence of an ante-chamber.

Both grottoes were excavated in the side of the hill, and were accessible from the level of the vale. The sepulchre proper—*i.e.* the inner cave—measures about six feet by five; but it can hold only three or four people on account of the cenotaph which occupies, on the right-hand side, nearly the whole length of the cave.[2] It was commonly thought that the actual tomb consisted of a solid block of stone, on which our Saviour's body was laid. M. Guérin, however, had some doubt on the point, suggested by his knowledge that the Jews regularly either enclosed their dead in *loculi* in the walls of their rock-hewn tombs,[3] or in stone coffins or sarcophagi. Never had he found an instance in which the corpse was uncovered and visible.[4] His suspicion turned out to be well founded, and he was able to verify its correct-

[1] Speluncam petræ dicit, eam quæ tunc fuit ante Salvatoris monumenti ostium speluncam; ex eadem petra, sicut hic in foribus monumentorum fieri solet, excisam. *Cat.* ix. *De Christi Resurrectione*; *P.G.* xxxiii. col. 834. [The whole passage should be read. Cyril states that in his day the ante-chamber had already disappeared, having been destroyed in the building operations. Yet the sepulchre now shown at Jerusalem has an ante-chamber.—*Trans.*]

[2] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 282. [See, however, Fergusson, *op. cit.* p. 152. If Adamnanus be right in his statement, *Libellus de locis sanctis*, that the sepulchre could hold "thrice three men," it may pertinently be asked whether his description is applicable to the present sepulchre. Fergusson points out that it would apply much more aptly to the cave in the Sakhra rock under the dome of the Omar Mosque.—*Trans.*]

[3] [*i.e.* as in the Roman Catacombs.—*Trans.*]

[4] *Jérusalem*, p. 147.

ness by a letter of Boniface of Ragusa, a sixteenth-century custodian of the basilica,[1] and which is printed among the works of Quaresmius.[2] Boniface, having once been obliged to strip the tomb of the alabaster slabs with which it had been encrusted by St. Helena in order to transform it into an altar, had made the discovery that the tomb was not solid, but hollow like a coffin.[3] On its sides he saw abundant and indubitable traces of the blood of Christ, of the spices, and of the hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus.[4] From the bottom of the sarcophagus he also took out a piece of the true cross, covered with some precious material, which, however, fell to pieces in his hand, leaving only a few golden threads.[5]

We know, from the stone at the "Tombs of the Kings" to the north-west of Jerusalem, how the funeral chambers of the Jews were closed. "Its form," says the Abbé Vigouroux,[6] "is that of a mill-stone, and it is moved by being rolled. To close the tomb the stone is pushed along a groove cut in the

[1] This friar afterwards became Bishop of Stagno; he died in 1581.

[2] *Elucidatio Terræ Sanctæ* (Antwerpiæ, 1639), V. xiii.

[3] Cum lamina una albatri ex iis quibus sepulcrum operiebatur et quas Helena Sancta ibi collocaverat, ut super iis sacrosanctum missæ mysterium celebraretur, necessitate urgente commovenda esset, aparuit nobis apertus locus ille ineffabilis in quo triduo filius hominis requievit.

[4] Erat locus sacrosancto Domini Jesu cruore, unguento illo, quo ad sepulturam unctus fuerat permixto. . . .

[5] In medio sacrosancti loci lignum reperimus collocatum ac sudario pretioso involutum, quod cum in manus reverenter suscepissemus deosculatique fuissemus, ubi primum illud aeri expositum est, inter manus nostras sudarium in nihilum abiit, nonnullis aureis filis ex illo solum manentibus.

[6] *Le Nouveau Testament et les découvertes modernes*, p. 179.

rock outside the tomb, in which it runs as on rails, and which is sufficiently long to allow of the entrance being completely uncovered." Such must have been the stone on which the angel sat, and which served as a door to the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa. It was in the form of a millstone, if we may trust Antoninus of Piacenza, who saw it in 570.[1] Judging by the remains of similar stones, it must have been about five feet in diameter and about a foot thick.[2] But I am informed that of the actual stone only a small piece survives. The Angel's Stone at the so-called palace of Caiphas agrees indeed with the measurements just given, but it is highly probable that, if it be a relic at all, it is a rock taken from the spot of St. Stephen's martyrdom.[3] The Synoptic Gospels confirm this description of the stone. According to St. Matthew, when the Holy Women reached the sepulchre "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, *rolled back* the stone, and sat on it."[4] According to St. Mark the women said one to another: "Who shall *roll* us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"[5]; whilst St. Luke states that: "They found the stone *rolled back* from the sepulchre."[6]

Lastly, St. Matthew says of Joseph of Arimathæa that: "He *rolled* a great stone to the door of the monument, and went his way."[7]

Twenty-five or thirty paces from the sepulchre, towards the north, there is a much-revered spot of

[1] Petra vero monumenti veluti molaris. *De locis sanctis*, 18; Tobler, *op. cit.* p. 101.

[2] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 281.

[3] [See *La Palestine, guide historique et pratique* (a work of the Assumptionists), Paris, 1904, pp. 138-139.—*Trans.*]

[4] Mt. xxviii. 2.

[5] Mk. xvi. 3.

[6] Lk. xxiv. 2.

[7] Mt. xxvii. 60.

which the Gospels say nothing. "Some distance beyond the place where Christ appeared to Magdalen," says Deshaye,[1] "is shown the spot where Christ appeared first to His mother."[2] Christ, who shared the fulness of human feelings, would naturally manifest Himself in the first instance to His blessed mother. Catherine Emmerich,[3] whom we may quote, now that we are not concerned with a question of history, gives a striking account of this episode. She sees an angel coming down to the *Cœnaculum*. The Blessed Virgin on receiving his message springs up (it was nine o'clock on the Sabbath evening), she throws her cloak about her, and hastens to Joseph's garden by way of the *Porta Antiqua*. There she follows a path now indicated by a series of chapels; she passes the Prison of Christ, and directs her steps towards the sepulchre, but is deterred by the sight of the sentinels, who are sleeping cosily rolled up in their capes. She hesitates, and falls back slightly to the north. Then the visionary sees a light in the east; it is the Saviour coming in glory from Limbo, followed by the patriarchs and the just of the olden Law. The heavenly procession descends to earth near Mary, and without touching the ground Jesus comes to kiss the forehead of His mother, whilst all about the patriarchs are singing the praises of the mother of their God. Then the vision fades,[4] and Mary knows not whether it was dream or reality, but imbued with a wonderful feeling of peace, she returns

[1] See Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire* in the *Panthéon littéraire* edition vol. ii. p. 333.

[2] Guérin, *op. cit.* p. 336; Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 283.

[3] *The Dolorous Passion*, English trans., p. 330 *f.*

[4] It is noteworthy that according to this tradition Christ must have re-entered Limbo, since the next day He said to Mary Magdalen: "I am not yet ascended to my Father"—Jn. xx. 17.

to the *Cœnaculum*, where the Holy Women are getting ready their ointments and spices.

And indeed, if events did not follow in the order we have given, how can we explain why Mary, the mother of Jesus, did not follow Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, to the tomb on the Sunday morning? Probably she watched their departure with a smile: she knew that it was useless to seek among the dead for one who was now again alive.[1]

The next day at about the dawn the Holy Women came to Calvary loaded with spices. Their one thought was how to circumvent the sentinels; how to open the tomb which had been sealed by the chief priests. Then suddenly there came the earthquake, and an angel brilliant with light and dressed in white drops from heaven, rolls away the stone, and takes his seat on it. The Temple soldiers are scared, and put to flight; the tomb is empty, and Christ has risen. Peter and John on receiving news of the event run to the garden, and Magdalen at a distance follows them, muttering that someone must have stolen the body of her Lord. She approached the sepulchre, and peeping in, saw two angels, who said to her:

"Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had said this she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou hast taken him hence tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning saith to him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master). Jesus saith to her: Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."[2]

This scene, one of the most touching of all the

[1] Lk. xxiv. 5. [2] Jn. xx. 13-17.

Gospel-scenes, took place near the stone which had been rolled away—Deshaye says about twelve paces to the north. The actual spot is a matter of doubt, but at any rate it was somewhere in the garden.

It was long implicitly believed that the last scene of this little drama was to be located in France. The story was that Magdalen crossed the seas, and settled in Provence. When in modern times her reputed coffin was opened, people were surprised to find on her skull, on the left temple, a piece of fresh transparent flesh. The event was duly recorded by an official deputation of the city of Aix, consisting of the president, an attorney-general, and two councillors.[1] It was inferred that when our Lord said to Mary "do not touch me," He Himself touched her with His right hand, and that the spot which He touched became forthwith incorruptible. Hence it was named the *Noli me tangere*, the Touch-me-not. "This fragment of flesh," says Father Ollivier, "came away from the skull in 1780. Since that time it has been religiously preserved in a crystal vase on the altar of the crypt of the Holy Oil."[2] Since then, however, an eminent ecclesiastical historian, Mgr. Duchesne, has come on the scene, and one of the results of his painstaking labours has been to throw grave doubt on a matter which once seemed above suspicion. Alas that the pretty flowers of vernal faith should be dried up by the summer sun of science!

[1] Lacordaire, *S. Marie-Madeleine*, 2nd ed. pp. 199-201.
[2] *Les Amitiés de Jésus*, p. 301, note 1.

CHAPTER II

THE HIDING OF THE CROSS AND OF THE TOMB

THERE is something surprising in the indifference shown by ancient writers as to what became of the instruments of the Passion after Christ was taken down from the Cross; still more surprising is the indifference shown by modern historians. However, quite early, there were various stories afloat, and the few who were inquisitive enough to concern themselves with such questions seem to have hesitated between one or other of two opinions. Thus both Eusebius and Constantine were persuaded that the True Cross had been buried by the Christians to preserve it from profanation; on the other hand, Paulinus of Nola, who was beholden for his information to Rufinus and Melania, was convinced that it had been hidden by the Jews. Then the curtain of silence again fell on the subject, and it was soon altogether forgotten.

Gretser, of all modern historians, was the first to examine the matter,[1] casting his vote for the second opinion; he was followed by Rohault de Fleury.[2] M. Amédée Thierry speaks[3] "of the cistern into which the Jews had hurriedly thrown the cross at the approach of the Sabbath." Sister Emmerich,[4] speaking

[1] *De Cruce Christi,* vol. i. p. 63.

[2] *Mém.*

[3] *S. Jérôme,* 4th ed. p. 198.

[4] *The Dolorous Passion* (in French trans., Retaux, 1899), chap. liii. p. 319. [The equivalent to this passage is not to be found in the English translation.—*Trans.*]

as one who intuitively saw into the past, says: "As the Blessed Virgin and her friends were returning from Calvary, whither they again proceeded to weep and pray, they saw coming towards them a band of soldiers escorted by torchbearers, and to make them room they scattered to right and left until the last of the soldiers had passed. These men were on their way to Calvary, doubtless in order to take down the crosses and bury them before the Sabbath." No historian could depict the probabilities of the scene better than this visionary.

1. THE BURIAL OF THE CROSS

At the beginning of the Christian era the northern suburbs of Jerusalem were well cultivated and densely peopled. Five centuries of unceasing labour had made the soil fertile; everywhere there were groves of olive-trees, fig-trees, and vines, which furnished the theme for several of Christ's parables. Speaking of the reconnoissance made by Titus before opening the war of A.D. 70, Josephus states that hedges and ditches and garden walls reached to the very ramparts of the city.[1] In Jerusalem there was only one spring, that of Siloe; but the toil of the inhabitants had made up for the natural scarcity by digging under the slopes of Gareb, and in the valleys of Hinnom and of the Cedron, great cisterns to preserve the rain-water.[2] Besides these great tanks there were other excavations to be found under the rocks on which the wall of Ezechias was grounded. One of these, "at about the flight of an arrow from the ramparts," was so large as

[1] Jos. *Wars*, V. iii. 2; vi. 2; VI. i. 1.

[2] Fons perennis aquæ, cavati sub terra montes et piscinæ cisternæque servandis imbribus. Tacitus, *Historiæ*, V.

to have been used by the Persians in 614 as a prison for their captives.[1] Another such cavern, smaller than the previous one, but nevertheless very large, had its opening at the foot of Calvary, and extended beneath the walls some distance under the city. This was the cavern of which the Jews made use on the night of the first Good Friday.

The distance between Golgotha, the sepulchre, and the hole into which the crosses were thrown was slight. Christ's death, though it had been decreed by Hebrew magistrates, had received the approval of Pilate, and, as a consequence, the execution was carried out in accordance with Roman custom. Only after the death of Christ do we find again the observance of Jewish usages in the burial of the sacred body[2] and in the hiding of the instruments of death.

As a general rule, the Romans crucified, whereas the Jews stoned, their malefactors. It must not, however, be taken for granted that the Jews had no knowledge of the cross as a punishment. When David delivered to the Gabaonites seven descendants of Saul in order to make an end to the famine which was wasting Judea, he took

"the two sons of Respha the daughter of Aia whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephiboseth; and the five sons of Michol the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Hadriel the son of Berzellai that was of Molathi and he gave them into the hands of the Gabaonites; and they crucified them on a hill before the Lord; and these seven died together in the first days of the harvest, when the barley began to be reaped. And Respha the daughter of Aia took hair-cloth and spread it under her upon the rock from the beginning of the harvest till water dropped upon them out of

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[1] See the narrative of an anonymous monk of St. Saba's, translated from Arabic into French in Couret's *la prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en* 614. Orleans: Herluison, 1896.

[2] "As the manner of the Jews is to bury"—Jn. xix. 40.

heaven, and suffered neither the birds to tear them by day, nor the beasts by night."[1]

But the Jews had a different method. They sometimes used a cross to hang the dead bodies of notorious criminals,[2] as a gamekeeper would use a "gibbet." But the word "cross" seems to have been almost unknown to them; they preferred to speak of the "wood," the "tree." In Deuteronomy we read:[3]

"When a man hath committed a crime for which he is to be punished with death, and being condemned to die is hanged on a gibbet; his body shall not remain upon the tree but shall be buried the same day; for he is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree, and thou shalt not defile thy land which the Lord thy God shall give thee in possession."[4]

In order that the land might not be rendered unclean, both the corpse and the instrument of death were buried in the night subsequent to the execution.[5]

The Romans, on the contrary, attached the condemned man, whilst yet alive, to the cross, sometimes by means of ropes,[6] but more commonly by means of nails, which were driven through his hands and feet. Four seems to have been the number of nails used, though there are not wanting certain ancient chroniclers who contend that both Christ's feet were fastened with a single nail. This contention is, however, equally alien to common-sense and to history.[7]

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 8-10.

[2] Didon, *Vie de Jésus*, vol. ii. p. 334. [3] xxi. 22 *sq.*

[4] See some examples of how this law was carried out in Josue viii. 29; x. 26.

[5] Solemne erat patibulum una cum corpore defuncti sepultura tradere. Habac. *Sanhedrim* in cap. xv. Quoted by Mgr. Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, 3rd ed. vol. ii. p. 266.

[6] Justus Lipsius, *De Cruce*, Antwerpiæ, 1615, II. ix.

[7] Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 167. In crucifying with three nails only, bones would necessarily be broken.

Plautus makes one of his characters to say, as he was sending a slave to death: "I will give a talent to him who gets first up the cross, on condition that the arms be pierced twice and the feet also twice."[1] In the well-known caricature, the Palatine *graffito*,[2] the man with the ass's head, which is intended to represent Christ, has his feet nailed separately; the youthful draughtsman, in this particular, doubtless reproduced a scene which he had often witnessed. Other authorities are of opinion that the condemned was attached by the wrists, as Plautus insinuates in the above, and not by the hands, which would not be sufficiently firm to bear, without tearing, the weight of the body. But in this they are running counter to the Gospel, for Jesus says to the unbelieving Thomas: "Behold my hands."[3] The corpse of the condemned was, according to the same Roman usage, deprived of burial, and remained exposed until the birds had picked the bones clean;[4] a watchman stood guard near the gibbet to prevent the body being carried away.[5] Jesus was accordingly crucified alive. As His agony might have been protracted several days, and as, moreover, the fact of His body and those of the thieves being exposed would have profaned the Paschal solemnity, the chief priests obtained of Pilate that the Roman custom should be set aside for once, and that the death of the condemned should be hastened by the *crurifragium—i.e.* by their legs being broken—so that, agreeably with the Deuteronomic legislation, the

[1] Ego dabo ei talentum, primus qui in crucem excurserat sed ea lege, ut affigantur bis pedes, bis brachia. *Mostellar*, Act ii. scene 1, verses 12 and 13.

[2] Garucci, *Il crocifisso graffito*. Rome, 1857.

[3] Lk. xxiv. 39; Jn. xx. 27.

[4] Non pasces in cruce cervos. Horace, *Epistles*, I. xvi. 48.

[5] Petronius, *Satiricon*, cxi.; Plautus, *Miles gloriosus*, II. iv. 19.

bodies might be buried and the crosses hidden that same evening.

The Rabbis had summed up as follows the rules to be observed:—

"Let none be hanged on a tree which is rooted in the ground, for the wood must be buried with the condemned in order that the latter may not leave in the world any memory of his shame, and in order that no man may say: Behold the wood on which so and so was hanged. With regard to the rock with which a man was stoned, or the sword with which he was beheaded, or the cord with which he was strangled, let all such objects be hidden away, not indeed in the sepulchre but in the condemned man's dungeon."[1]

In the case of our Lord, the sepulchre was not large enough to allow of the legal procedure being carried out in its entirety. As we have already stated, the sepulchre is only six feet by five, whereas our Saviour's cross, according to what is antecedently probable, and indeed true in the case of the good thief's cross,[2] measured some fifteen feet by seven.[3] Accordingly the historian Socrates is guilty of a mistake when he states that the true cross was found in the Holy Sepulchre.[4] St. John describes the tomb as he found it after receiving the first news of the Resurrection. His narrative[5] depicts a narrow

[1] Nemo suspenditur ad arborem solo innatam, sed ad avulsam, ne forte excisio ejus sit molesta; quia lignum una cum suspenso sepeliendum est, ne relinquat turpem in mundo memoriam, aut dicatur: ecce de hoc ligno pendebat iste vel iste. Sic et lapis quo aliquis obrutus, gladio quo decapitatus, sive mantile quo aliquis strangulatus, omnia hæc sepeliuntur, in carcere tamen occisi, non in ipso sepulcro. Maimon, *Sanhedrim*, xv. Quoted by R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 51.

[2] It is shown in Rome in the basilica of the Holy Cross.

[3] R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* pp. 73-74, and plates 2 and 3.

[4] *Hist. Eccl.* I. 17; *P.G.* lxvii. 118-122.

[5] Jn. xx. 6, 7.

cell which had contained a body and nothing more. Peter could scarcely have entered and taken stock of the place[1] had it been encumbered with the instruments of the Passion.

But Jewish custom, as well as Roman usage, had been to some extent set at naught in the burial of Christ. The friends of the crucified lost all rights over the condemned. But in this case the execution had been sanctioned by Pilate, and he was a Roman. Now the Roman law, as afterwards explained by Ulpian, had it that "their bodies shall not be otherwise buried, save this favour have been previously sought and obtained." In certain circumstances this favour was not to be granted. "And let no such permission be given when the crime is particularly grievous."[2] As soon as the Master had breathed His last, His secret disciple, Joseph of Arimathæa, making use of the power inherent in his position as a Sanhedrist, went in to Pilate, and asked for the requisite permission to bury the body.[3] The governor, tired as he was of being made the tool of Jewish hatred, once again showed his belief in Christ's innocence by granting the request. From this instant the mortal remains of Christ belonged to His mother. They were bathed in the tears of Mary Magdalen, and embalmed with the myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus;[4] and passers-by, seeing the

[1] Lk. xxiv. 12.

[2] Corpora non aliter sepeliuntur, quam si fuerit petitum et permissum . . . et nonnunquam non permittitur maxime majestatis causa damnatorum. *De cadaveribus punitorum*, xlviii. 24. [Ulpian's instance where the permission in question is to be refused seems to be that of the *crimen majestatis*, not that of a "particularly grievous crime."—*Trans.*]

[3] Jn. xix. 38.

[4] Jn. xix. 39.

stone rolled in front of the sepulchre, might say: "This is the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth, whom the priests crucified." With respect to the crosses, they disappeared together with the bodies of the two thieves, Gesmas and Dismas; doubtless carried away by the Temple-guards as soon as the disciples, overtaken by nightfall, had closed the sepulchre and withdrawn to the *Cœnaculum*.

If we take our stand in the middle of the Holy Sepulchre Church, facing southward, we shall have the sepulchre to our right, Calvary in front of us, and the chapel of St. Helena, below which later on the crosses were to be discovered, far away to our left—*i.e.* in the extreme east of the basilica. Concerning the identity of the spots there is not much doubt; in 327 the Bishop Macarius consecrated them by erecting altars, which have stood there for over fifteen centuries, whilst different buildings have succeeded each other above—first Constantine's basilica, then that of Modestus, then that of Constantine-Monomachus, and lastly that of the Crusaders. The three crosses, and probably also the bodies of the thieves were taken down to the lowest part of the cavern, which opened at the spot of Golgotha. Deshaye, who was sent in 1621 by Louis XIII. to report on the Holy Places, thus describes this cave: "On coming out of this chapel[1] we find on our left a large staircase, which descends through the walls of the church down to a kind of cellar hewn out of the rock. After having gone down some thirty steps we see on the left a chapel which is commonly known as the chapel of St. Helena, because here she prayed whilst the Holy Cross was being sought for. We

[1] The reference is to the chapel which commemorates the casting of lots on Christ's seamless tunic.

then descend another flight of eleven steps to the spot where it was found."[1]

The Holy Sepulchre Church was burnt down in 1808, but in the rebuilding no change was made in the position of these various spots. Take, for instance, Pierre Loti's vivid account of the same locality: "In deep darkness we descend to the chapel of St. Helena by a wide, much-used and broken, and perilous staircase, itself scarcely more than a ruin. . . . At the bottom we find the chapel, which after the darkness of the staircase seems as bright as day. Here we feel creeping over us that unspeakable feeling of ages long passed away. Scarcely can we catch the far-distant sound of the music and the bells in the church above. But behind the altar we find another staircase, which takes us down even lower, into yet blacker darkness."[2] Father Zanecchia states[3] that the chapel is twenty-one feet below the basilica, and that from it thirteen more steps lead us to the place of the finding of the Cross—a room about twenty-three feet long and about fifteen in width and in height. In seeing it we are instantly reminded of the caverns which the Persians transformed into prisons, or of those in which, Sister Emmerich tells us, the broken-hearted disciples hid themselves during the dreadful night which followed the Passion.

Whose were the hands that dragged the crosses to the bottom of this abyss, where they lay forgotten until A.D. 327? In his letter to Macarius, Constantine takes it for granted that the Christians had excavated this hole to screen the Cross from

[1] See Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire.*

[2] *Jérusalem,* p. 59.

[3] *La Palestine d'aujourd'hui,* vol. i. p. 286.

evil.[1] Evidently he was misled. The real authors of the disappearance of the Cross were the Jews, who after all were merely carrying out the instructions of their law. All along they kept their eyes on the doings of the disciples. On the Sabbath day—the first Holy Saturday—they went to Pilate, and said:[2]

"Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away and say to the people: He is risen from the dead, and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them, You have a guard, go, guard it as you know. And they, departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards."

Hence Calvary and the sepulchre were both guarded by the soldiery, by the same fanatical servants of the high priest who had dared to buffet Christ and spit in His face. There was no longer any room for the Blessed Virgin and the disciples, even had they elected to remain. If we may believe the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, even Joseph of Arimathæa was apprehended for his kindly intervention on behalf of Christ.

Hence the Temple-guards remained the masters of the situation during the Good Friday night. The chief priests being only too anxious to hide everything reminiscent of the Passion, in order not to provoke a new explosion of popular sympathy for the Nazarene, took care that the Cross should disappear. Moreover, in so doing they had tradition on their side; hence they had both the crosses and the bodies of the thieves cast into the cistern. Here they were safe from observation; and the place being

[1] Quod communi omnium hoste sublato. Eus. *de vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 1090.

[2] Mt. xxvii. 63 *sq.* [Matthew is the only Evangelist who records this mission of the priests and its sequel.—*Trans.*]

near one of the gates, it would soon be filled up with the rubbish of the city, which would effectually bury the instrument of the Passion.[1]

This conjecture is based on a juridical reason. The execution of a condemned man in its every detail belonged to the public authority. The hiding of the crosses, of the stones, of the sword, or of the cord, in Hebrew law, was a part of the execution. Hence the Jews went by their law. As the cistern is at no great distance from Calvary, we may say that the instruments of the Passion were buried in the very place of the execution. Moreover, it is easy to see that, in fact, the Jews were the real actors in this part of the play. Can we imagine the followers of Christ throwing the Cross of Salvation, with the crosses of two common rogues, one of whom had died with a blasphemy on his lips, into a receptacle of the city filth? No; the sacrilege is laid at the door of the high priest. He and his satellites kept their secret so well that the disciples never learnt what had become of the sacred relics. The True Cross, stained with the blood shed by Christ for man's salvation, remained for nearly three centuries hidden at the bottom of the pit, and above it the deposit of dirt from the city each day grew larger.

2. THE CŒNACULUM[2] AND THE FLIGHT TO PELLA

The fortieth day after His Resurrection, Christ brought His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and

[1] Carnifices cruces Christi et latronum in vallem monte Golgotheo subjectam præcipitasse, terraque obruisse, deinde egestis ac exoneratis super illas totius civitatis sordibus, vallem oppletam fuisse, crucesque sub sordium acervo obrutas delituisse. Gretser, *De Cruce Christi*, i. p. 63.

[2] On the *Cœnaculum*, see Lagrange, *La dormition de la sainte*

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after a last message to them ascended to heaven, leaving on the ground where He had last stood the imprint of His left foot.[1] The disciples then returned to Jerusalem.

"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes and Jude the brother of James. All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren." [2]

The house, which St. Luke does not otherwise describe, is the *Cœnaculum.* St. Epiphanius, after stating that this was its name, adds that it was thither that the disciples betook themselves after the Ascension.[3] The Apostles seem to have gone there so naturally that, in the absence of any text to affirm the fact, we may infer that it was their habitual residence. Here it is then that we must locate three scenes which occurred after the Passion. First, the appearance of Jesus on the evening of the Resurrection to the Apostles and the disciples of Emmaus, who had just returned with all haste to give their good news to the rest. Christ said to them : "Peace be with you." He showed them His

Vierge et la maison de Jean Marc, Revue biblique, 1899, p. 589 *ff.*; Zahn, *Die Dormitio Sanctæ Virginis und das Haus des Johannes Marcus, Neue Kirchl. Zeitschrift.* x. 5. The preceding article is a criticism of the latter. *Huit jours à Jérusalem,* p. 111.

[1] Zanecchia, *op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 433 and 434. [For a fuller description of the story, and of the similar traces said to have been left at Jerusalem by Mohamed, see De Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 172.]

[2] *Acts of the Apostles,* i. 13 *sq.*

[3] In quem discipuli, posteaquam Salvator in cœlum ex Oliveti subvectus est, sese recipientes, cœnaculum conscenderunt. *De mensuris et ponderibus,* 14 ; *P.G.* xliii. col. 259, 262.

hands and His side, and partook of a piece of roast fish and of a little honey.[1] Secondly, the appearance a week later, when Thomas was permitted to put his hands to the wounds of our Saviour.[2] Thirdly, the manifestation on the fortieth day, during the meal, which took place a few hours previously to the Ascension.[3]

The same walls, now long since crumbled away, also witnessed the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles[4] and the Last Supper. Certain modern critics suppose that these last two events happened in different places. They point out that the pilgrim Theodosius—we are uncertain of the date of his visit—locates the Last Supper near the Virgin's tomb at Gethsemani,[5] and that to find a decisive testimony for identifying the locality of the Last Supper with that of the descent of the Holy Ghost we must wait till Hesychius of Jerusalem (A.D. 438) draws a parallel between Bethlehem and the basilica of Sion.[6] But we may well protest against Theodosius' slight mistake being pitted against a tradition which is based on very good arguments. Mark[7] uses, in order to describe the *Cœnaculum*, words very similar to those of which Luke makes use to describe the lodging of the Apostles. St. Epiphanius, as we have already said, states that the house in which the Apostles received the Holy Ghost was called from the very beginning the *Cœnaculum*—a word evidently

[1] Lk. xxiv. 36-43; Jn. xx. 19-23.
[2] Jn. xx. 24-31.
[3] Mk. xvi. 14.
[4] Acts ii. 1-4.
[5] Et ibi est basilica Sancte Marie, Matris Domini, et ibi est sepulcrum ejus. Et ibi est locus ubi Dominus cenavit cum discipulis suis. *De Terra Sancta*, xi.; Tobler, *op. cit.* p. 60.
[6] Tu (Bethlehem) panem fermentasti, *sed Sion cœnam ostendit. Sermones*; *P.G.* xciii. col. 1480.
[7] Mk. xiv. 15.

reminiscent of *Cœna*—the "dining-hall." Lastly, it would be difficult to explain why in the fourth century a large portion of the Maundy-Thursday service took place in the church of Sion, if it was not believed that the Holy Eucharist had been instituted in this building. Were Theodosius correct in his view, the ceremony should have taken place in St. Mary's basilica. Arculfus in 670,[1] Venerable Bede about 720,[2] are witnesses to the constancy of the tradition impugned by Theodosius.

It was to the house of a friend and disciple that on Maundy-Thursday Christ directed His steps. This is apparent from the tone of His injunction[3]: "Go ye into the city to a certain man, and say to him, The Master saith, My time is near at hand, with thee I make the pasch with my disciples." This friend it was that furnished the first church for Christianity, and a home for the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles. "All they that believed were together, and had all things in common."[4] According to Theodosius the *Cœnaculum* belonged to the mother of the Evangelist Mark[5]; according to the pseudo-Antoninus (570) it belonged to St. James[6]; according to Abbot Daniel (1102) it was the house of John the Theologian.[7] None of these testimonies are decisive. The Apostles John and James were with Christ on Maundy-Thursday; hence it would not have been necessary to send

[1] *Relatio de locis sanctis ab Adamnano scripta,* xix.; Tobler, *op. cit.* p. 160. [It should be borne in mind that *Sion* is now often used to designate merely the *Cœnaculum.—Trans.*]

[2] *De Locis Sanctis,* iii.; Tobler, p. 218. [This account, there is reason to believe, is based on the former.—*Trans.*]

[3] Mt. xxvi. 18.

[4] Acts ii. 44.

[5] *De Terra Sancta,* vi.; Tobler, p. 65.

[6] *Perambulatio locorum sanctorum,* xxii.; Tobler, p. 103.

[7] *Itinéraires russes en Orient.* p. 35.

a messenger into the city had the house belonged to them. With regard to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, it was not the *Cœnaculum*; it was to the former house that Peter later on, after having miraculously escaped from prison, went on an Easter night, and there found the Christians gathered together;[1] but that this was not the *Cœnaculum* is proved by the fact that James was not there. According to Venerable Bede[2] and the monk Bernard, who made his pilgrimage about the year 870,[3] the Blessed Virgin dwelt in the *Cœnaculum* after the Passion; here also she died, if we may call an end such as hers a death.[4] On the plan of Sion drawn by Adamnanus from the description furnished by Arculfus, we find in a corner, to the right on entering, the words: "Here St. Mary died."[5]

A few writers have been found to maintain that owing to the *Cœnaculum* proper having been transformed into a church, Mary was obliged to migrate to a little adjacent building.[6] Adrichomius, a Dutch pilgrim of the sixteenth century,[7] informs us that he saw the one remaining wall of this building.[8] The Abbé Durand[9] adds: "Adjoining this house was a little chapel, with a cistern within. According to

[1] Acts xii. 12 *sq.*

[2] Ibique Sancta Maria obierat, *loc. cit.*

[3] *Itinerarium Bernardi monachi Franci*, xi.; Tobler and Molinier, p. 315.

[4] See a sermon of Modestus (seventh century) on the Assumption. *P.G.* lxxxvi. col. 3288-3300.

[5] Hic Sancta Maria obiit. Tobler, p. 160. See the sketch below.

[6] Hipplytus of Thebes (eighth century) states that the house where Mary died had been bought by John. Lagrange, *loc. cit.* p. 596.

[7] He died in 1585.

[8] *In descriptione locorum montis Sion*, No. 10.

[9] *L'Écrin de la Sainte Vierge*, vol. ii. pp. 479-480.

Quaresmius[1] it was called the chapel of St. John the Evangelist, because, according to tradition, it was here that the beloved disciple was accustomed to offer up the unbloody sacrifice in Mary's presence. Boniface of Ragusa also writes of this sanctuary; in his time it was still in existence, and still contained St. John's altar. But the greater basilica, of which this chapel had once formed a part, had already disappeared, so that the chapel stood by itself.[2] Nothing whatever now remains of any of these buildings."

There are, however, certain details in this last-mentioned tradition which are very suspicious. The Mass did not acquire its complete liturgical form till a good many years after the death of Christ. It would be an anachronism to picture the Apostle John, served by an altar-boy, saying Mass for the Blessed Virgin, whilst the other Apostles were worshipping God in the Temple according to Jewish rites.

It is possible to reconstruct fairly accurately the *Cœnaculum* by combining Arculfus's plan[3] with the very circumstantial description of the place in 1106 given by the Russian abbot Daniel.[4] It seems to have consisted in a house having a ground floor and one upper room, the direction of the house being due east and west. The entrance was somewhat to the east on the northern side. As is customary in the Levant, whereas the lower room was partitioned off into several chambers designed to serve the purposes of the household, the upper room was undivided, and served as a guest-chamber for the

[1] *Elucidatio terræ sanctæ,* bk. iv. chap. xvi.
[2] *De perenni cultu Terræ Sanctæ,* bk. ii.
[3] Tobler, p. 160.
[4] In Mme. de Khitrowo's trans. p. 35.

visitors.[1] Arculfus's plan only shows a single floor; but this is evidently a mistake of Adamnanus, who acted as his draughtsman, for that the building contained an upper and a lower room can scarcely be doubted in view of St. Cyril's statement. It must be borne in mind that the latter had seen the house before it was transformed into a basilica.

On the ground floor two small rooms were situated against the western wall; of the two, the one to the north was the Virgin's cell, whilst in that to the south the disciples were assembled when Christ appeared to St. Thomas. At the other end of the ground floor—*i.e.* to the east—was the room in which, according to a tradition (which, by the way, seems scarcely consonant with the Gospels), Christ washed His Apostles' feet. The space between these different compartments was soon transformed into a public oratory.[2] Against the southern wall there was a flight of stairs leading to the first floor.

The single upper room had been honoured by the celebration of the Last Supper, which is stated to have taken place at its eastern end, whilst at the western end was the sleeping apartment of the Apostles; here too it was that the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles in tongues, as it were, of fire.[3] This is how Arculfus also divides up the

[1] Lagrange, *Revue biblique*, 1899, p. 591.

[2] Abbot Daniel's description is confirmed by the *Pilgrimage of the archimandrite Grethenios* (circa 1400). "Below, beneath the room which witnessed the descent of the Holy Ghost, is the cell where Christ appeared to His disciples after eight days, and there too it was that Thomas touched the side of his Lord, and believed." Mme. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes*, p. 176. *Cp.* in the same collection the *Pilgrimage of Ignatius of Smolensk*, p. 154, and the *Life and Pilgrimage of the deacon Zosimus*, p. 212.

[3] Cyril, *Catecheses*.

room. The Apostles, doubtless through motives of reverence, avoided religiously the place of the Last Supper.

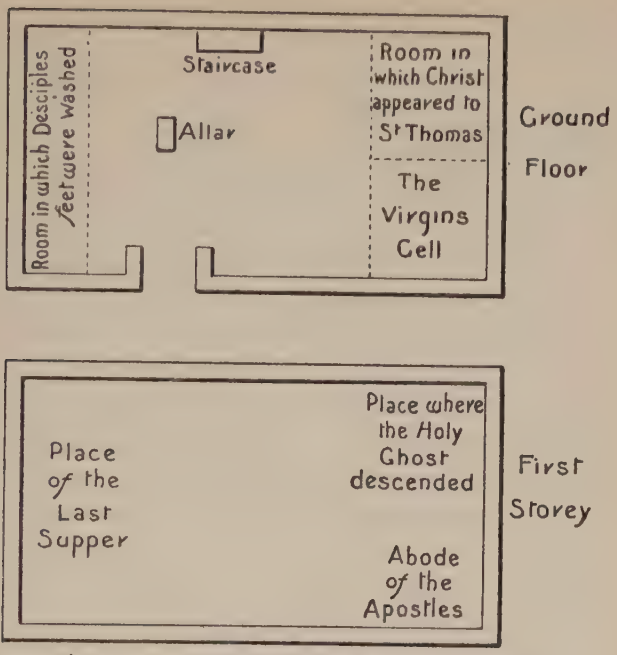
The texts from Epiphanius and Bede, to which we have already made allusion, prove that the *Cœnaculum* had early become a church.[1] Theodosius states that, already in the sixth century, the Pillar of the Scourging had been carried thither, and that, besides this relic, there were venerated here the Crown of Thorns, which was kept in the centre of the church, and the Holy Lance, which stood in the sanctuary.[2] Doubtless, so long as it existed, this building, from the Passion onward, never ceased being a resort of the faithful, and the depository of their sacred relics, for we must remember that it escaped destruction in the siege by Titus,[3] and that among the early Christians tradition ranked above all else.

What must not have been the feelings of the Apostles, the witnesses of the great Sacrifice, when they contemplated the Crown of Thorns—that only crown whose kingdom knows no end—so near to the sacred spot where the risen Master had greeted them with the words "Peace be to you"? Every human heart experiences the need of treasuring up mementoes of the dead it once loved; families piously preserve the uniforms or the medals and decorations of those of their members who have fallen fighting for their country; even the most stern-hearted of Protestants venerate at Geneva the pulpit used by Calvin. Is it conceivable that the Blessed Virgin and Magdalen

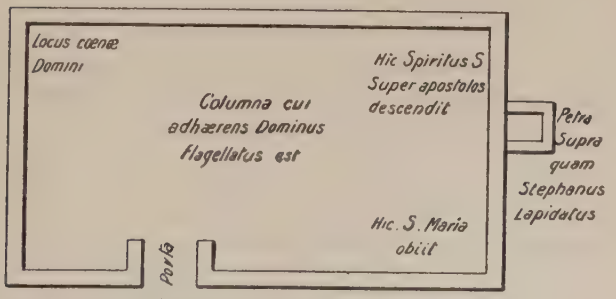
[1] Theodosius, *loc. cit.*, calls the basilica of Sion [the Cœnaculum] "mater omnium ecclesiarum."

[2] Et est ibi in media basilica corona spinea. . . . Inde venis ad Sacrarium, et ibi est lancea. Tobler, p. 65.

[3] Epiphanius, *De mens. et pond.* 14; *P.G.* xliii. 261.



The Cœnaculum according to the descriptions given by Abbot Daniel and the Archimandrite Grethenios.


Locus cœnæ Domini
Hic Spiritus S Super apostolos descendit
Columna cui adhærens Dominus Flagellatus est
Petra Supra quam Stephanus Lapidatus
Hic. S. Maria obiit
Porta

The Cœnaculum according to Arculfus
Taken from Tobler's Stineva Tevræ Santtæ

and the beloved disciple should not have gathered together the instruments which had been used to afflict their friend and their Saviour? Some suppositions are antecedently so probable that they scarcely fall short of certainty.

The two relics which formed the earliest treasure of *Cœnaculum* are both mentioned in the Gospels. Longinus—his name is probably only a nickname, derived from a word meaning a spear [1]—had the happiness of furnishing the first of the relics. It is told of him that he suffered from weak sight, and that he was instantaneously cured by some of the blood and water, which gushed from Christ's side, falling on his eyes. He collected the blood of the Saviour in a phial, with which he would never part, and which is said to have been found in his grave at Mantua [2] during the reign of Charlemagne (804).[3]

Christ was taken down from the Cross by soldiers who from foes had been changed into friends. They had abused Christ, believing Him to be guilty, but they had since had occasion to change their minds. Their centurion had been the first to betray this alteration in their views when, pointing to Christ hanging on the Cross, he had exclaimed [4]: "Indeed this was the Son of God." The Blessed Virgin could stand by, weeping in peace, for she had as her defence against the fury of the Jews the respect of the

[1] λόγχη. [See the section on Longinus's lance in De Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* pp. 144-156.—*Trans.*]

[2] *Acta SS.* 15th March. *De S. Longino milite et de S. Longino centurione.*

[3] At the request of the emperor, the Pope went to Mantua to examine the finds. He identified the Precious Blood by the inscription on the phial, and also the tomb of Longinus. Eginhardus, *Annals of France*, A.D. 804. French trans. by Teulet, p. 114.

[4] Mt. xxvii. 54.

Roman guard. Doubtless the Crown of Thorns was the first thing to be handed her. John had hastened to remove this instrument of torture which disfigured the inanimate body of his Master. Soon the nails too had been extracted, one after the other, and thrown on the ground.[1] The body slipped down the planed wood, and lay at the feet of His mother, on whose lap His head rested; the stains of blood were wiped away, and the body was ready for burial. But can we believe for a moment that the Crown of Thorns, the nails, and the sponge with which the body had been washed, were suffered to remain on the spot? Roman law handed over to the executioners the clothing and the ornaments of small value which the condemned man had worn.[2] The executioners in this case had shared the clothing, drawing lots for the seamless coat[3]; but can it be believed that Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, both men of wealth, should have allowed these relics to be forgotten, or that they did not buy them back at the soldiers' price? As for the lance which had pierced the side of Christ, whether it was the property of the Roman State or a private belonging of the soldier, it remained, at all events, in the hands of the latter. Longinus was baptised, and left the service; it seems probable that he presented the weapon to the community of his adoption. When the news of the Resurrection spread, Peter and John came running to the scene. Simon Peter forthwith "went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about his head,

[1] R. de Fleury, *Mém.* 169.

[2] Ulpian, *De panniculariis*, i. 6; *De bonis damnatorum*, *Digest*, xlviii. 20.

[3] Mt. xxvii. 35; Jn. xix. 23-24.

not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapped up into one place."[1] Are we to believe that the disciples treated these fabrics as things of no account? All that had belonged to the Son now belonged to the Mother, and hence it is extremely likely that these relics were removed to the *Cœnaculum*, where the Blessed Virgin was to pass the last days of her earthly exile.

The *Cœnaculum* lay near the ramparts, to the south of the Western Mount—a mount often called the Christian Sion to distinguish it from the old Sion of Judaism, which was on the opposite hill. Here the Apostles dwelt in the "upper room,"[2] with the door safely bolted "for fear of the Jews."[3] Only occasionally did they leave it to go up to the Temple, where they were accustomed to worship among their own countrymen,[4] or to visit the Holy Sepulchre, which seems to have been even then an object of veneration.[5] The Scribes and Sadducees detested them, but the common people heard them gladly,[6] and protected their dwelling-place.

Later on, when blood again began to flow, the stones which had served to shatter the mortal frame of the proto-martyr St. Stephen were also collected, and afterwards kept company with the Crown of Thorns and the Holy Lance in the *Cœnaculum*.[7] The

[1] Jn. xx. 6-7.

[2] Acts i. 13.

[3] Jn. xx. 19.

[4] Acts iii. 1.

[5] Qui Christiani fidem sequebantur post mortem ejus, monumentum istud magnopere coluerunt. Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* i. 17; *P.G.* lxvii. 118.

[6] Acts ii. 5-37; iv. 21.

[7] Theoder. § 6; Antoninus M. 22. According to the Itinerary of Arculfus the block of stone kept at the *Cœnaculum* was that *on which* St. Stephen had been stoned, § 19. Bede, as might be expected, follows Arculfus. See the texts in Tobler's *Itinera.*

plan left by Arculfus shows that St. Stephen's relics were housed in a kind of out-building to the west.

Thirty years after these events there was much commotion at Jerusalem. The Jews were convinced that the time predicted by Daniel was at hand. They persisted in denying the divine character of Jesus, but being under the impression that the Messiah would suddenly come, during a popular upheaval, to lead them on to victory, they began to plot the overthrow of Roman supremacy. The Zealots were closing up their ranks; the Sicarii, soon to be headed by John of Gischala, were laying waste the country, making no distinction between friend and foe. Rumours of war occasionally reached the disciples in the *Cœnaculum*; St. Epiphanius has it that they were warned to fly by an angel from heaven.[1] But there was really no need of invoking the *Deus ex machina*. The Christians had not forgotten the parting words of Christ: "When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst thereof depart out, and those who are in the country not enter into it, for these are the days of vengeance."[2] A similar warning had been given by Peter and Paul not long before their death (A.D. 65 or 66), to wit: "That soon God would send against the Jews a king who would overcome them, and lay their cities level with the ground, who by a siege would reduce them by hunger

[The later history of the Crown of Thorns is dealt with in L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 138 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

[1] *De mens. et pond.* 15; *P.G.* xliii. 262.

[2] Lk. xxi. 20-22; Mt. xxiv. 15-16.

and thirst to the last extreme. That then they would take to eating human flesh, would rise one against the other, that they would be taken captive by their foes, and see their women tortured, their virgins violated and put out to hire, their children enslaved, their sucklings dashed on the ground, and everywhere the reign of the all-destroying fire and iron, and finally the disappearance of the entire race, carried a prisoner to foreign climes."[1]

This awful prediction, which was verified to the letter in the event, was alluded to by Phlegon,[2] a pagan writer of the second century, whose works have, unfortunately, perished. Our only knowledge of this allusion of his is derived from Origen, who writes as follows:—"Phlegon indeed, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his Chronicles, ascribes to Christ the foreknowledge of certain future events, though he goes astray in putting Peter's name in the place of that of Jesus, and he bears witness that the prediction was fulfilled."[3] The mistake, however, was not Phlegon's, but Origen's. Phlegon in mentioning Peter was merely speaking of the same tradition as is vouched for by Lactantius.

The Christians had recognised the fulfilment of the double sign in the passing triumph of the Zealots and of the Sicarii,[4] and in the approach of the Roman army to lay siege to the Holy City.[5] They may also have received a timely intimation of approaching disaster from Peter at Rome, for Eusebius throws out a hint that they had been warned by information sent

[1] Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum*, iv. 21; *P.L.* vi. 516-517.
[2] A freedman of Adrian's.
[3] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ii. 14.; *P.G.* xi. col. 823 *f.*
[4] Jos. *Wars*, II. xiii. 3.
[5] Jos. *Wars*, II. xix.

by certain saintly persons.[1] Their subsequent conduct had been dictated to them beforehand by Christ: "He that is in the field let him not go back to take his coat, and woe to them that are with child and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter nor on the Sabbath."[2] The Christians of Jerusalem obeyed the injunction. They were not deceived by the retreat of Cestius. Had they awaited the approach of Titus they would have been forced by John of Gischala to live out the siege in the city.[3] They withdrew, headed by their bishop, Simeon, the relative of Christ, afterwards martyred under Trajan at the age of one hundred and twenty. In leaving the *Cœnaculum* they did not forget the relics of the crucifixion. Seemingly these were shared out among the brethren—a view which accounts for the disappearance of certain items.

M. de Champagny[4] is probably right in his conjecture that the departure of the Christians took place soon after the retreat of Cestius Gallus—*i.e.* about the beginning of the year 67. The Abbé Fouard[5] is of a different opinion, and states that it occurred during the siege: "In those days when Simon set his robbers at John of Gischala, in the midst of these internal troubles, the watch at the city gates must have been laxer than was usual. Seemingly the retreat of the Christians was effected during, or soon after, one

[1] Ex oraculo quod viris quibusdam sanctissimis divinitus editum fuerat. *Hist. eccl.* iii. 5. [More probably this refers to the angelic visitation mentioned by Epiphanius, and alluded to above.—*Trans.*]

[2] Mt. xxiv. 18 *sq.* [3] Jos. *Wars*, V. x.

[4] *Rome et Judée au temps de la chute de Néron.* Paris: Bray, 1865.

[5] *Saint Paul et ses dernières années*, 2nd ed. pp. 357-360. Paris, 1899. [English trans., *The last Years of St. Paul*, by Griffith. Longmans, 1901.]

of these storms." But this opinion of M. Fouard's scarcely agrees with the texts we possess. Had the Christians fled during the siege their action would have been entirely natural; whereas chroniclers seem agreed on this point at least, that the circumstances at the time of the flight were not threatening—so much so that some historians sought to explain the Christians' departure by a warning given by an angel, or by men prophetically inspired. Eusebius, too, explicitly informs us that the flight took place before hostilities began.[1] St. Athanasius, archbishop of Alexandria, makes a like statement when, speaking of the crucifix of Berythus, he says: "Two years before Titus and Vespasian destroyed the city the faithful and the disciples of Christ were warned to flee to Agrippa's kingdom, he being an ally of the Romans. . . . They then carried away with them the ikon, with other church furniture."[2] The direction of this retreat was not left to the faithful. The injunction given by certain holy men of God[3] was to the effect that they should cross the Jordan, and passing into Decapolis, settle down at Pella (Tabakat Fahil), a mountain stronghold. "The situation of this spot," writes M. Fouard, "is a splendid one. It stands on a ledge 1000 feet above the Jordan valley, and it

[1] Ante initium belli.

[2] Sed biennium antequam Titus et Vespasianus eamdem subverterint urbem, admoniti sunt a spiritu sancto fideles atque discipuli Christi, ut relicta urbe, ad regnum se transferent Agrippæ regis, quia ipse tunc Agrippa Romanis fœderatus erat. . . . Quo tempore etiam icona cum cæteris rebus ecclesiasticis deportata, etc. Athanasius (Spuria), *P.G.* xxviii. col. 818.

[3] Ex oraculo quod viris quibusdam sanctissimis divinitus editum fuerat ante initium belli ex civitate migrare, et oppidum quoddam trans Jordanem, Pellam nomine, incolere jussa fuisset. Eusebius, *H.E.* iii. 5; *P.G.* xx. col. 222.

is plentifully supplied with water from the torrents which dash down the ravines round about. The natural beauty of the spot had already attracted thither some of Alexander's veterans, who had bestowed on it the name of their leader's country, Macedonia; the town was a pagan rather than a Jewish settlement."[1] In this charming spot the refugees found peace, nor were they molested by the sceptical worshippers of Jupiter.

It is not my business to narrate the siege of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), nor to speak of Eleazar and his 2400 Zealots entrenched round the Holy of Holies; of John of Gischala and his 6000 robbers who occupied the other portions of the Temple, nor of Simon, son of Gioras, who with the priests and most of the people had taken his stand in the higher city. The three factions waged war unmercifully one with the other, and this under the very noses of the enemy. All we can say is that they one and all died the death of heroes. But we cannot pass over in silence certain details of the memorable siege. "His blood be upon us and upon our children" had been the cry of the Jewish rabble when it demanded the death of Christ.[2] The wish expressed by that cry was fulfilled. The Roman captives soon learnt to know the meaning of torture. Josephus states that the hatred and the anger of the Roman soldiery caused these unhappy men to experience before dying every sort of torture which brutal warriors might be expected to inflict. When the besieged attempted a sortie for the sake of foraging they were seized, and crucified in front of the walls. Not less than five hundred wretches

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 359, note 1. For a description of Pella see Guérin, *La Galilée*, vol. i. p. 289 *sq.*

[2] Mt. xxvii. 25.

perished daily after this fashion. As Josephus says: "They nailed those that they caught to crosses, one after one way and another after another, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies."[1] The ghastly forest of crosses, and the crowds of carrion crows and vultures which hovered around them, hid from each other the two opposing armies.

After the siege was over there was left not an inhabitant in the city. All those who bore weapons were slain, with the exception of the finest men among them, who were reserved to grace the victor's triumph, and serve as meat for the beasts in the newly erected Coliseum. The other people were reduced to slavery. A few days before the Passion, as Jesus was coming out of the Temple, "one of his disciples saith to him, Master, behold what manner of stones and what buildings are here. And Jesus answered and said to him, Seest thou all these great buildings? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down.[2] Titus, in order to prevent any renewed hostilities, commanded the tenth legion, *Fretensis* (from Sicily), to destroy the city to its very foundations. His orders were fulfilled to the letter, so much so that Josephus writes: "There was nothing left to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."[3] Later on, when Titus again passed through the city on his way to Egypt, he found the place a wilderness of ruins, amidst which his soldiers were busily digging for the treasures which, as they had been informed by their prisoners, were buried there during the siege.[4] At the foot of

[1] Jos. *Wars*, V. xi. 1.
[2] Mk. xiii. 1-2.
[3] *Wars*, VII. i. 1.
[4] *Wars*, VII. v. 2.

the western hill, on which some buildings still reared their heads, was to be seen nothing but tottering walls, from the midst of which there came the regular sound of the sappers' picks and occasionally a call of the *buccinum* conveying the centurion's orders.

Chateaubriand is of opinion that the siege of A.D. 70 had no effect on the appearance of the Holy Places. In A.D. 33 Golgotha was, as we have said, outside the town. In A.D. 42 Herod Agrippa erected the third line of ramparts, by which Gareb, Bezetha, or the new town,[1] and consequently the Holy Places also, were enclosed within the city limits.

On first reconnoitring the city Titus had proposed to attack it on this side;[2] had he done so Calvary would have been completely altered by his military works. In the event, however, the third line of ramparts was pierced near the Temple, upon which Titus took up his position, in the camp of the Assyrians and in the valley of the Cedron. He finally entered the city by way of the Temple, so that the garden of Joseph of Arimathæa suffered nothing from the war. When the time came for the destruction of the wall of Ezechias, the soldiers simply overthrew the stones, and left them piled in heaps. As the cavern containing the crosses lay at the foot of, and underneath, this wall, it was definitively covered by the broken-up masonry. Calvary, lying as it did some little distance from the wall, came out scathless, and the same is true of the Holy Sepulchre, which lay still farther back; the stone which closed its entrance, and which was found intact in 327, preserved it from damage.

[1] Jos. *Ant.* XIX. vii. 2.
[2] Jos. *Wars*, V. ii.

3. THE BURIAL OF THE HOLY PLACES BENEATH THE FOUNDATIONS OF ÆLIA CAPITOLINA

Some few erections were spared by Titus from the destruction which followed the siege of Jerusalem. "Cæsar gave orders that they should . . . leave as many of the towers standing as were of greatest eminence—that is, Phasaelus and Hippicus and Mariamne—and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side."[1] Herod's palace, which had not been hurt by the siege, and the quarter round about it, was made the camping-ground of the tenth legion. But the army followers also required lodgings, and these were found in the vicinity of the *Cœnaculum.*[2] "The *Cœnaculum,*" writes St. Epiphanius, "was built in the higher portion of Sion, and was surrounded by a few other buildings and seven synagogues, which afterwards served as sheds. Of all these buildings it alone was still standing at the time of Constantine, like 'a cottage in the vineyard,' to use the expression of Scripture."[3]

The Jews, ousted from their city, made Cæsarea the centre of their religious life and of their rabbinical schools, but the Christians, who had retired to Pella, probably returned home as soon as the war was over.[4] There was, at least, no difficulty in their way, for

[1] Jos. *Wars,* VII. i. 1.

[2] [It must be borne in mind that the *Cœnaculum,* though outside the present walls of Jerusalem, lay at that time within them, at their south-western angle.—*Trans.*]

[3] *De mens. et pond.* 14; *P.G.* xliii. 259-262.

[4] Epiph: "Inde post eversam urbem regressi, ingentibus . . ." *op. cit.* 15; but a few lines above, when speaking of Adrian's visit, the same writer says: "Jam enim ex urbe Pella reduces docere cœperant."

they had behaved as loyal subjects of Rome in leaving the rebellious city together with the family of Agrippa, the ally of the Romans and ruler of Pella. With them they brought back the Crown of Thorns and the Holy Lance, but the vesture and the winding-sheet of Christ had already gone astray.

The faithful of Jerusalem being Jews by birth were outwardly little different from the other Hebrews. Until the time of Adrian not one of their bishops had been a Gentile.[1] Their bishops practised those customs of the older Law which had not been forbidden by the new. Down to A.D. 137 they united the rite of circumcision with that of baptism.[2] Possibly on account of the confusion of these two sacraments, possibly for some other reason, the Jewish Church, among all the Christian Churches of the Empire, was the only one to be molested by Adrian.

When this emperor made his tour, "the city," writes Renan, "had been sitting in desolation for already fifty-two years, presenting the spectacle of a heap of huge stones all disjointed and strewn about. The only habitations to be perceived were a few wretched buildings on Mount Sion, mostly belonging to Christians. The site of the Temple had become a breeding-place for jackals. These ruins gave to Adrian a thought, which all ruins seem to have suggested to him — viz. the desire to rebuild and colonise the city."[3]

But the Jews were awaiting from year to year "the star which was to rise out of Jacob and the sceptre

[1] Quos omnes origine Hebræos fuisse memorant. Eus. *H.E.* iv. 5; *P.G.* xx. 310.

[2] Proinde cum episcopi qui ex circumcisione erant per id tempus defecerint. Eus. *ibid.*

[3] Renan, *L'Église chrétienne*, 4th ed. chap. ii. p. 21 *sq.*

which was to spring from Israel."[1] Hence the emperor considered that it would be wise to destroy their Messianic hopes by wiping out the very name of Jerusalem. The new city was to be exclusively Roman, and to bear the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, in memory of its founder, Ælius Adrianus, and of Jupiter Capitolinus.

The *Fretensis* legion, which was still quartered amidst the ruins of the Temple, forthwith set to work clearing the ground,[2] and by the year 122 numbers of Latin colonists had already made their appearance. The building and the populating of Ælia was largely left to veterans; tiles and bricks bearing the mark of the legion, L.X.F or LE-X-FR (Legio X Fretensis), are still frequently found round about the city.[3]

At the spot where Herod's Temple had stood the Romans erected a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, in front of which they placed a statue of Adrian, on the very spot once occupied by the Holy of Holies. Renan, who is unable to treat a serious subject without sounding a note of good-humoured scepticism, insinuates that Jupiter was, of all the gods, the deity who in gravity and decorum came nearest to Jehovah.[4]

But the Jews showed little appreciation for an act which Renan would have us regard as one of extreme graciousness. The measures decreed by Adrian[5] to repress the custom of circumcision were made the pretext of a general revolt. Akiba saw in Bar-

[1] Numbers xxiv. 17.

[2] Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. v. p. 130.

[3] *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions*, 1872, p. 158; Zanecchia, *La Palestine d'aujourd'hui*, vol. i. p. 188.

[4] Renan, *op. cit.* p. 27.

[5] Spartian, *Adrian.*

Kokaba the star which was to rise out of Jacob; Judea was aroused; and the danger seemed so great that the emperor recalled from Britain Julius Severus, his most trusted general. If the victory achieved by Titus was the ruin of Jerusalem, that gained by Severus was the ruin of Judea. Fifty strongholds and nine hundred villages were razed to the ground. Bar-Kokaba died fighting, and Akiba was taken, and torn to pieces with a white-hot iron rake. Those that survived were drafted off to serve as food for the beasts in the circus.

This insurrection followed closely on the building of the new city,[1] and its result was that Judea became a solitude,[2] in which wolves and hyænas could multiply in peace. *Ælia Capitolina*, so far as the surviving Jews were concerned, was a closed city. Only once in the year were they allowed, conditionally on the payment of a certain tax, to come and weep on the ruins of the Temple. During the rising Bar-Kokaba had found time to kindle a persecution against the Christians, and had caused all to perish in torments who refused to blaspheme the name of Christ.[3]

Renan writes:[4] "Ælia with its Roman colony was strongly guarded. . . . Doubtless, too, the road between Ælia and Cæsarea—the real centre of Roman supremacy—was never in danger. Thus during the insurrection Ælia was never cut off from the rest of the Empire. Communication with the outer world

[1] Dion Cassius, *Hist.* lxix. 12.

[2] Ita ut omnis pene Judæa relicta sit et deserta. *Ibid.* 14.

[3] Justin, *Apol.* i. 31; *P.G.* vi. col. 375; Eus. *Hist. eccl.* iv. 6; *P.G.* xx.; Orosius, vii. 13; *P.L.* xxxi. 1093.

[4] Renan, *ibid.* pp. 201, 202. See also Appendix I. (p. 541), where he discusses the question whether Jerusalem [Ælia] was besieged under Adrian.

was preserved by means of the string of colonies lying to the north and east of the city, especially by means of the two strongholds, Nicopolis and Lydda, where the Romans were firmly entrenched. It is probable that the revolt on its way northward did not reach beyond Bether, and that it never threatened Jerusalem."

At the end of the war the building of the new city was resumed. There being no longer any Jews to persecute, Adrian turned his attention to the Christians, though he did not put them to death like Bar-Kokaba, the law of the time preventing any governor from taking the initiative against Christians.[1] The faithful held in veneration the Holy Sepulchre and Calvary; both these places were accordingly desecrated and set aside for the worship of the gods of Rome. The pagans built a twenty-foot wall round Golgotha, and then filled in the space between with masonry.[2] They thus changed what had been a valley [the vale between Golgotha and the Tomb] into a high level platform some 300 feet in length. On this platform gardens were laid out, in the midst of which, immediately above the Holy Sepulchre, stood a statue of Jupiter, whilst above Calvary there was a marble statue of Venus and a small temple.[3] By so doing the builders actually frustrated their own purposes, for they thus marked for future generations the very spots of which they wished the memory to perish. No idol was placed

[1] See Adrian's letter to Minucius Fundanus. Eus. *Hist. eccl.* iv. 9. Also Trajan's rescript to Pliny. [See also Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London: Kegan Paul, 1907, p. 83 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

[2] Eus. *Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 1086.

[3] Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* i. 7; *P.L.* xxi. 476; Socr. *Hist eccl.* i. 17; *P.G.* lxvii. 118; Theophanes, *Chronogr.* (A.D. 317); *P.G.* cviii. 110 *f.*

above the disused cistern, in which the crosses now lay—a fact which tends to prove that the Christians were ignorant of its position, and that it was the object of no special veneration. Lastly, that nothing might be left undone, Bethlehem was transformed into a grove sacred to Adonis.

St. Jerome writing to St. Paulinus of Nola says[1]: "From the time of Adrian to that of Constantine —*i.e.* for nearly two hundred years—an idol of Jupiter was adored on the spot of the Resurrection, and a marble statue of Venus in the place where the Cross was raised. The persecutors thought that they would destroy belief in the Resurrection and in the Cross by defiling the Holy Places with the worship of idols. Even our own Bethlehem, the most sacred spot on earth, of which the prophet said: 'Truth is come out of that land,' was made into a grove sacred to Adonis, in which, in the very cave which had heard the first cry of the God-made-Man, people mourned the lover of Venus."

The pagans had acted perfidiously; they wished to make it appear that the Christians in venerating Calvary were worshipping Venus. The faithful soon deserted the unhallowed spot, and shut up their worship within their own hearts.[2] Still they did not forget the Holy Places. The events of A.D. 137 resulted in great alterations in the Church of Jerusalem. The church of the circumcision perished with the Roman victory, and the faithful being now all of them Gentiles, at last selected an uncircumcised bishop,[3] Mark. The Latin colonists soon tired of

[1] Ep. lviii.; *P.L.* xxii. 581.

[2] Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* i. 7.

[3] Primus post episcopos ex circumcisione sacerdotium illius civitatis suscepit Marcus. Eus. *H.E.* iv. 6; *P.G.* xx. 316.

Ælia, and went back to their homes, and the Christians were left in peace until the time of Diocletian. The miracle of the oils at the Easter of 162, in the reign of Aurelius, shows that worship was carried out publicly.[1] The bishop Alexander was even able to found a library, well known for its treasures, which was still existing at the time of Eusebius of Cæsarea.[2] Here evidently the Church was very different from the Church of the catacombs.

4. THE EARLY WORSHIP OF THE CROSS. THE MONOGRAMS

The crosses on which malefactors were put to death may be classed in three categories.[3] There was the *Crux decussata*, or cross in the form of the letter X, also known as St. Andrew's cross. It was composed of two beams crossed at an acute angle, like the strokes in the Latin figure for ten ; the ends of both beams, in this case, were buried in the ground. Then there was the *Crux commissa*, also called *patibulata* (gallow-shaped), which consisted in a short beam fastened to the top of a longer beam ; this cross resembled the letter T. Lastly, there was the *Crux immissa*, or *capitata* †, also known as the Latin cross. It was formed of a long vertical beam, which was crossed at two-thirds of the height by another and shorter beam, which was fastened in the centre.[4]

[1] Eus. *H.E.* vi. 9. [2] Eus. *H.E.* vi. 20.

[3] F. Martin, *Archéologie de la Passion*, Paris: Lethielleux, p. 165 *sq.* Justus Lipsius, *De cruce*. Antwerp, 1617. Martigny, *Dictionnaire des antiquités chrétiennes* (art. *Croix*). [*Encycl. Bibl.* art. Cross.—*Trans.*]

[4] [There was yet another cross, the *Crux simplex*, a single stake or gigantic spit on which the criminal was impaled. See Cicero, *Pro Rabirio*, 4.]

As Christ's cross had not been described by the Evangelists, and as it had been hidden as soon as the Passion was over, the faithful soon forgot its shape. It would seem that the cross used was the *crux immissa*, as we are told that the soldiers placed the title over Christ's head.[1] Dom Calmet, however, has invented a new theory: "The prolongation of the cross, to which was fixed the title or sentence of condemnation, was merely a stake bearing a board, on which the words were graved." In 1856 Garucci found among the Palatine ruins a caricature, probably of the second century, drawn on the wall, and depicting Christ nailed to the cross in the form of a man with an ass's head. Dom Calmet is right in his statement that this cross is in the form of a T, and that from the middle of the transverse beam there rises a little stake, no doubt designed to carry the title.[2]

But one document is not sufficient to establish a thesis. The Latin cross, that form which has prevailed in our crucifixes, has in its favour a long-standing tradition.[3] There are also two other noteworthy testimonies in its favour. Firstly, that of Justin Martyr, who was put to death in 168 under the philosopher Marcus Aurelius, and who sees a prophecy concerning the cross in the blessing pronounced by Moses on the tribe of Joseph. "To Joseph also he said, Of the blessing of the Lord be his land, of the fruits of heaven, and of the dew, and of the deep that lieth beneath. . . . His beauty as of

[1] Mt. xxvii. 37; Lk. xxiii. 38.

[2] The caricature may be found in Daremberg and Saglio's *Dictionary* (art. Crux). Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vi. p. 208; Peraté, *Archéologie chrétienne*, p. 141, etc.

[3] Aringhi, *Roma subterranea*. Martin, p. 168.

the firstling of a bullock, his horns as the horns of a rhinoceros."[1] St. Justin conceives of this figure as if the two horns of the bullock and the single horn of the rhinoceros[2] were all on a single head. He goes on: "Nobody can explain nor show us a representation of these horns of the unicorn elsewhere than in the cross. As a matter of fact, the cross consists of a perpendicular beam, of which the higher portion stands out as a horn, whilst the other beam, which is fastened to it, projects at either side, as it were two horns attached to the single horn in the centre."[3] This text seems to agree thoroughly with the form of the Latin cross. One of its ends being buried in the ground, only the three horns—*i.e.* the upper extremities—of the cross remain in sight. We have, secondly, the still more important testimony of St. Irenæus (A.D 140-202), who succeeded St. Pothinus as bishop of Lyons. His testimony is of even more value than Justin's, for having been Polycarp's

[1] Deuteronomy xxxiii. 13, 17. [From one point of view there would be a certain advantage in reading "unicorn" (as in the Authorised Version) instead of "rhinoceros," the beauty of the latter beast being a quality which very few are able to discern. —*Trans.*]

[2] Fouard points out that the word "horn" has a symbolic meaning. In his *Vie de Jésus* (vol i. p. 29) he thus translates Zachary's canticle (Luke i. 68-69): "He has raised up for us out of the house of David, his child, a might unconquerable [a horn], our salvation." In note 3 on the same page, following Winer (*Grammatik des N.T. Sprachidioms*), he states that Κέρας σωτηρίας is a genitive with oppositional force. Fillion, *Les Saints Évangiles*, translates the two Greek words in question by "a mighty Saviour."

[3] Unicornis enim cornua nemo dicere aut demonstrare possit in alia re aut figura inveniri, nisi in ea quæ crucem exhibet. Rectum enim unum lignum est, a quo summa pars in cornu attollitur, cum adaptatum fuerit aliud lignum et utrinque extrema, veluti cornua uni adjuncta cornu apparuerint. Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judæo*, cap. 91; *P.G.* vi. 691 and 694.

disciple, who himself was a hearer of St. John, his testimony may be taken as the last echo of the Beloved Disciple. According to St. Irenæus, "the cross had five extremities or summits, in length two, in breadth two, and in its centre also one, to support the body of the crucified."[1] This is an exact description of the traditional cross; nothing is wanting, not even the *sedile*.

With these texts to rely on we may safely dismiss as unnecessary the too recent testimonies of St. Jerome, of St. Augustine,[2] and of St. John Damascene.[3] We may, however, allude to the upper portion of the good thief's cross preserved at Rome in the basilica of the Holy Cross; it may not be the relic it purports to be, but it certainly is a very ancient article. We may also ask how St. Peter could have been crucified head downwards had his cross been in the T form.[4] Lastly, in the ruins of Pansa's house at Pompeii, on a white stucco background, there was found a cross in relief.[5] This cross is of the *crux immissa* type. It would seem that this is a Christian monument, and if so, it is the most ancient known, for it must have been wrought before A.D. 79.

A certain number, though a minority, of the Fathers were of opinion that Christ died on the three-armed gibbet known as the *Crux commissa* or *patibulata*. Their opinion was founded on the prophecies of Ezechiel. The Jews were to be destroyed by Divine Justice, but the Lord said to the Cherub:

[1] Irenæus, *Contra Hæreses*, lib. ii. cap. iv; *P.G.* vii. 794 and 795.

[2] Et altitudo ab illo innixo ligno sursum quod eminet. In Psalm ciii.; *P.L.* xxxvii.

[3] *De fide orthodoxa*, iv. 11; *P.G.* xciv. 1129.

[4] *Cf.* R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 66.

[5] Mazois, *Les ruines de Pompéi*, vol. ii. p. 84.

"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and mark Thau upon the forehead of the men that sigh and mourn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof."[1] Now the sign *Thau*, of which the Bible here speaks, is undoubtedly the sign of the Redemption, and in its Greek form as a capital it is written like the Latin T. From this Tertullian hastens to infer that "the Greek letter Thau and our own Latin T show the true form of the cross which, according to the prophet, was to be impressed on our foreheads in the true Jerusalem."[2] Paulinus of Nola[3] also adopted this alphabetical answer to the question, and the mistaken view soon gained a good number of adherents. Its traces are to be found in the catacombs, notably in that of St. Callixtus, in the third-century inscription IRETNE. The size of the fourth letter of this inscription clearly shows it to have a symbolic value.[4] All the emblems dear to the early Christians reappear on a second-century cornelian[5]; the anchor, the fish, the sheep, the dove, the ship, the cross, the Good Shepherd, are huddled together on the small face of the jewel. Here the cross, in the form of a T, is put to figure the Passion, and is actually repeated three times: in the arms of the anchor; in the cross surmounted by a dove, which the sheep carries on its back; and in the mast of the ship.

St. Paulinus and Tertullian were led astray by their

[1] Ezechiel ix. 4.

[2] *Contra Marcionem*, iii. 22; *P.L.* ii. col. 353.

[3] Cujus figura per litteram Græcam Tau numero trecentorum exprimitur. Ep. 24 ad Sev.; *P.L.* lxi. 300. The Greek letter *thau* does, in fact, stand for 300.

[4] Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma sotterranea*, p. 230; Peraté, *Archéologie chrét.* p. 142.

[5] Northcote and Brownlow. (In Allard's French trans. p. 300.)

ignorance of philology, and they it was that provoked the mistaken designs of the early Christians. They sought for the form of the sign *Thau* in Greece and Rome, never adverting to the fact that Ezechiel, being a Jewish prophet, wrote and spoke in Hebrew, and that this being the case, the letters he mentioned should be looked for in Palestine or in Phœnicea. Now though it is true that the capital *Thau* in Greek resembles the *Crux commissa*, this is not at all true of the Phœnicean *Thau*. The Phœnicean character was written in two fashions—× or +[1]—*i.e.* in the form of St. Andrew's cross, *crux decussata*, or in that of the Greek cross, which is only a variation of the traditional *crux immissa* or *capitata*. Of the two forms of this letter the latter must have been the more frequently used, for dealing with this question, St. Jerome remarks that "among the ancient Hebrew letters, of which the Samaritans still make use, the *Thau* has the shape of a cross."[2] Hence the mark *Thau*, which Ezechiel saw on the foreheads of the elect, may well be none other than the sign of the traditional cross with four ends.[3]

Another objection to the traditional view is more recent. M. Cobet, a Dutch philologist, who was followed by several German scholars,[4] laboured to prove that the crosses used in executions consisted

[1] Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionary* (art. Alphabetum).

[2] Antiquis Hebræorum litteris quibus usque hodie Samaritæ utuntur, extrema Tau crucis habet similitudinem. *In Ezech.* cap. ix.; *P.L.* xxv. See the note to col. 88.

[3] *Arch. de la Pass.* pp. 166-167.

[4] The bibliography of the question is thus given by Martin (*op. cit.* p. 283): Cobet, *In Chariton* in the *Zeitschrift Mnemosyne*, Leyden, viii. 275; Marquardt, *Röm. Alterthüm.* VI. i. 194; Kipping, *De Cruce*, p. 74; Jahn, *Archäologie*, II. i. 365; Kraus, *Beiträge zur Trierschen Archäologie*, Treves, 1868, p. 64.

of two pieces only, and this in order to facilitate the then very frequent crucifixions—firstly, of an upright beam permanently fixed in the ground, this portion serving for all crucifixions; secondly, of a movable cross-beam, the *crucile*, which was made anew for each execution. The arms of the condemned were fixed beforehand to the two ends of the cross-beam, and he was then marched off to the place of execution; here the cross-beam was lifted into a groove in the upright beam. A cross formed on this system would be in the shape of the letter T.

But this hypothesis, invented two thousand years after the event it has to explain, is anything but probable. It has not even been proved[1] that at Rome the *crux patibulata* was exclusively used, and *a fortiori* it would be more difficult to prove that the Roman custom, if indeed it be such, was followed in Jerusalem.

At Rome slaves only were crucified, and they suffered on the Sestertium outside the Esquiline Gate[2] and were executed by their own special executioner.[3] Here the gibbets were so numerous as to constitute a regular forest, their great number being the result of the bodies being left exposed until they had been devoured by the birds and beasts of prey.[4] In such a place it is conceivable that from motives of expediency and economy the uprights were fixed and permanent, and that the cross-beams only were renewed. But Jerusalem was the capital of a province

[1] Martin names the following author as having already confuted this view:—Zestermann, *Die Bildliche Darstellung des Kreuzes und der Kreuzigung Jesu Christi* in the *Programm der Thomasschule.* Leipsig, 1867.

[2] Tacitus, *Annals,* ii. 32.

[3] Called the *carnifex.*

[4] Loiseleur, *Des peines,* p. 91.

in which slavery as commonly understood was unknown, and where the punishment in vogue was not crucifixion, but stoning. Here crucifixion, whether it was inflicted by the caprice of the governor on people of free condition, or, as in the case of Christ, in order to ratify a sentence already passed by the Sanhedrim, was an unusual punishment. Moreover, even in the last case, though the sentence was carried out by legionaries, Jewish usage again came to the fore when once death had ensued. Now it will be recollected that according to the Sanhedrim the crucified was never to be hanged on a tree holding to the ground by its roots, nor consequently on a beam permanently fixed in position, because the instrument of death was to be buried together with the body on the night following the execution.[1]

Moreover, the terms used by the Evangelists tell against the hypothesis just mentioned. Matthew says[2]: "And going out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; him they forced to take up the cross of Jesus." Similar words are used by Mark,[3] and Luke,[4] and John also agrees in this, that the cross was carried.[5] Now whoever uses the word cross means the cross entire.[6] A *crucile* is no more a cross than a flagstaff, is a flag. What Christ carried was the whole cross, and it was the cross whole and entire that was buried on Good Friday. It was a *crux immissa—i.e.* with four extremities—and the crucifix known to

[1] See above, p. 44.

[2] Mt. xxvii. 32.

[3] Mk. xv. 21.

[4] Lk. xxiii. 26.

[5] Jn. xix. 17.

[6] [In modern languages, especially in English, owing to the influence of ecclesiastical terms, this may not be quite true. We have expressions in which "cross" signifies properly the transverse—*e.g.* "cross-beam"—or the adverb "across." But we must bear in mind that this use of the word is comparatively modern.—*Trans.*]

every Catholic is a form which agrees thoroughly with the data of archæology.

It is not difficult to account for the mistaken views which at an early date prevailed among the Christians. The Christians had to be careful even in the symbols of which they made use. The pagans not only tortured them, they also made use of calumny. One great man, whose prejudice led him astray whenever he ventured to discuss the Christians—Tacitus—was early in the field to accuse them of infamous practices.[1] Tertullian specifies some of the atrocities with which the Christians were credited. "It is said that in our mysteries we slay and eat a child, and that when this horrid meal is over we proceed to treat abusively our own sisters and mothers as soon as the dogs which serve us in our iniquities have thrown down and extinguished the torches, and by delivering us from light have also freed us from shame."[2]

It can scarcely be maintained that Tacitus was in good faith when he wrote of the Jews that during their journey through the wilderness, when reduced by thirst, they discovered water by following a herd of wild asses, and that in memory of this event they placed an image of the ass in their most holy place.[3] But this calumny which had served for the Jews was soon made to serve for Christians also. At the end of the second or beginning of the third century a caricature of Jesus bearing the legend "The God of the Christians, the donkey tribe," was hawked about:

DEUS CHRISTIANORUM ONOKOITHS.

[1] Sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. *Annals*, xv. 44.

[2] *Apologeticus*, vii.; *P.L.* i. 307.

[3] Effigiem animalis quo monstrante, errorem sitimque depulerant penetrali sacravere. *Hist.* v. 3, 4.

"On it Christ is shown," writes Tertullian,[1] "decorated with a donkey's ears and hoofs, holding a book in His hand, and dressed in a toga. We laughed at the inscription and the figure, and so did others (the Pagans), though it would have been more in accordance with their practices had they bent the knee to the monster, who after all was quite good enough to be worshipped by people who do not scruple to adore gods with a lion's or a dog's head, or with the horns of a goat or ram, gods who are partly goats and partly serpents, and who carry wings on their back or on their feet."[2]

Such being some of the calumnies to which the Christians were exposed, it is not to be wondered at if they endeavoured to screen from the vulgar certain of their tenets, which otherwise would only have given rise to new blasphemies. Through considerations of prudence the Church abstained from depicting the cross even in the catacombs, so much so that de Rossi found only one instance of the use of the Greek cross, the cross in question being engraved on a memorial stone in the crypt of Lucina beneath the inscription *Rufina rest in peace.*[3]

Nevertheless, the Christians were fond of representing the cross under various transparent disguises. They saw a symbol of the cross in the four points of the compass,[4] in the man who prays with arms out-

[1] *Apol.* xvi.; *P.L.* i. 366-374.

[2] Archæologists will find in the Luynes collection in the French National Museum an image in baked clay which corresponds with Tertullian's description, save that in addition the mannikin wears a mitre. This piece of work hails from Syria. See the picture in Duruy, *Hist. des Romains,* vol. v. p. 795.

[3] *Roma Sott,* vol. ii. pl. 18. Duruy, vol. vii. p. 39, note 1. Northcote and Brownlow (in the French trans.), p. 298.

[4] Ipsa species crucis quid est nisi forma quadrata mundi? Jerome, *In Marcum,* xv.; *P.L.* xxx. 638.

stretched,[1] in the swimmer,[2] in the stock which crosses the shank of the anchor, in the yard which crosses the mast,[3] in the bird flying heavenward with outstretched wings, making in its flight a noise reminding one of a whispered prayer.[4] The shaft of a cart, the crutched handle of a spade[5] or the symbolic fish stuck on a trident, all served to illustrate the cross. The standards of the Roman regiments consisted in a pole provided with a cross-bar, on which hung a little red banner called the *vexillum*. At the top of the pole was the eagle with outstretched wings, called the *signum*. It would seem that the Christians actually saw in these idols of the legionaries reproductions of the *crux patibulata*, or T-shaped cross. Thus Tertullian exclaims: "By adoring the Victories you adore the crosses which are in the midst of your trophies. What would the legions not do for their standards? They even swear by these sacred 'signs,' which they consider as deities, more bountiful than all the other gods together. Those images with which you crown your standards, the banners with which you adorn them, are so many ornaments with which you decorate the Cross."[6]

Not only had the Christians to fear pagan calumny, there was also the danger of a misunderstanding arising. The Romans worshipped material gods—gods

[1] Si statueris hominem manibus expansis, imaginem crucis feceris. Tert. *Ad nationes*; *P.L.* i. col. 578.

[2] Homo natans per aquas . . . forma crucis vehitur. Jerome, *In Marc.* xv.

[3] See above, p. 78.

[4] Tert. *de oratione*, 29; *P.L.* i. 1196.

[5] Justus Lipsius, *de Cruce*. See plate on p. 42 (1870 edition).

[6] *Apolog.* xvi.; *P.L.* i. col. 366-368. Minutius Felix upholds the same view in *Octavius*, xxix.: Nam et signa ipsa et cantabra et vexilla castrorum, quid aliud quam inauratæ cruces sunt et ornatæ?

made of wood and metal. Now had the faithful been allowed to worship the image of a cross, how would it have been possible to convince the idolators that the worship was not bestowed on the image, but upon the crucified which the image symbolised? Tertullian is in such fear of an occasion being furnished for such a confusion that he seems to forbid altogether the use of crosses by Christians.[1] He writes as follows:—"With regard to those who imagine that we worship the cross, they share in our idolatry when they venerate a piece of wood; for what difference does it make that the form be other if the matter is the same, and if this matter be considered as the body of a god? And again, what difference is there between a cross and the statue of the Athenian Pallas, or of Ceres of Phares, which is nothing but a huge shapeless hulk? Every upright piece of wood stands for a portion of the cross."[2]

We may also believe that yet another feeling came in to hinder the Christians from making figures of the Cross. The Church sprang originally from the Synagogue, and the faithful of the earliest period remained steadfast in observing the customs of the Jews. The Lord had said to Moses: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them."[3] Was it lawful to shape or "grave" a cross, or to venerate, or kneel before, it? Had the old Law been abrogated by the new, and if so, to what extent? These were

[1] *Apolog.*; *P.L.* i. 366.

[2] [The passage which follows is probably corrupt, and its meaning is anything but evident.]

[3] Exodus xx. 4, 5.

not questions to be answered off-hand; and the Christians' dislike for anything savouring ever so little of idolatry is nowhere better seen than in the *Octavius* of Minutius Felix. "So far as crosses are concerned, we neither worship nor desire them, whereas you who make wooden gods may sometimes adore as a part of your gods the wood which has served for making crosses."[1] Dom Le Nourry, one of the Benedictine editors of the *Octavius*, pleads attenuating circumstances on behalf of his author. According to him Minutius Felix would not have spoken as he did had he had before him a portion of the True Cross, which was as yet hidden. He also strives to explain away the force of the words *cruces . . . nec optamus*, which he takes as meaning: "We do not seek crucifixion, but if we are crucified we suffer cheerfully."[2] But this explanation seems to us ingenious rather than true. Minutius Felix used expressions which are not in agreement with the present practice of the Church, but which are quite pardonable in an early Christian writer, whose main object was to show how idealistic our worship really is.

But in other directions the Christians considered themselves more free. The Jews, in spite of their rigorism, did not consider that the prohibition of graven images extended to writing. They were accustomed to tie against their forehead and on their left arm little lockets containing phylacteries—*i.e.* strips of parchment on which were written favourite extracts from their sacred Scriptures. The Christians followed them in making use of the pen for expressing

[1] Cruces etiam nec colimus nec optamus. Vos plane qui ligneos deos consecratis, cruces ligneas, ut deorum vestrorum partes forsitan adoratis. *Octavius*, xxix.; *P.L.* iii. col. 332.

[2] *P.L.* iii. col. 532.

externally the signs of their faith. For this purpose they used monograms. One form, which seems to have been a general favourite, was the combination of the two Greek letters X and P, giving the monogram ☧. The Abbé Martigny thus sums up its history[1]: "St. Ephrem, who lived in the fourth century, bears witness that this form of the monogram was much used in the East. It also seems to have been the only form known in Egypt." He adds that the faithful adopted this sign from the pagans, doubtless because, on the one hand, it contained the first letters of Christ's name, and also because, being a pagan sign, it would not serve to betray the Christians.

However, M. Martigny seems to have made a slight mistake in the above. The early Christians imitated this pagan monogram, but, in the first instance at least, they did not exactly copy it. They sought a sign which should be peculiar to themselves, and they found it by combining the letters X and I. Consequently in their monogram we find I in the place of P. The X was kept because it showed the form of the *crux decussata* or St. Andrew's cross. Thus in the monogram ☩, Christ's two Greek initials were expressed (ΙΗΣΟΥϹ ΧΡΙΣΤΟϹ). The most ancient instance of this monogram occurs on a tombstone belonging to A.D. 268 or 279.[2]

The so-called monogram of Constantine is the second to appear, but in spite of the name by which it is known, it goes far back; in fact, it is merely a restoration of the old pagan form mentioned by St. Ephrem. As we said, it is composed of the Greek letters X and P, forming ☧, a monogram which gives

[1] *Dict. des antiq. chrét.* (art. *Monogramme du Christ*), p. 476.

[2] Northcote and Brownlow (in the French trans., p. 299).

the first two letters of the word Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟϹ). This monogram is usually found between the first and last characters of the Greek alphabet, A and Ω, the alpha and omega which symbolise the beginning and end of all things.

After having served on monuments, this monogram entered the home, and soon became an equivalent of the modern scapular. "There were pious people," writes Mgr. Gerbet, "who wore it round their necks.[1] Medals which have been worn are necessarily pierced by a hole, through which the string or chain may be passed. Such medals have been found; that mentioned by Aringhi[2] is made of brass, and bears Christ's monogram.[3] Though it is circular in shape, the top is shown by the head of the letter P. It is at this spot that the medal is pierced. It was found in a martyr's tomb, and appears to belong to an age not later than that of Diocletian."

But though the monogram was in use at the end of the third century, this is not true of the cross, which was not to be publicly represented until after the finding of the True Cross. How the change came about we cannot say, nor at what date the cross began to appear on the altars and on the front of the churches. According to the popular view no one had any longer any thought of the cross, when suddenly by a miracle it made its appearance in the skies before the startled eyes of Constantine and his army. As soon as its shape was known Constantine, moved by grace, procured to be made a standard, called the Labarum, which was in the form of the cross, and which henceforth was carried in front of the legions. With the

[1] *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, vol. ii. p. 216.
[2] *Roma subt.* bk. vi. cap. 23, vol. ii. p. 567.
[3] *i.e.* the so-called monogram of Constantine.

help of Providence he gained his victory, and assumed the purple. In the meantime Helena, the mother of Constantine, looking on the vision as a command to restore the True Cross to light, and moved by divers other divine admonitions, hastened to Jerusalem, had a deep hole dug into the ground, and there had the happiness of finding the long-forgotten Cross of Christ.

St. Helena's life is so closely bound up with the worship of the cross that it will be necessary to cast a glance at her history. We must clear away what is legendary, and bring to light what is true among the many interesting details which form, as it were, the preface to the Finding of the Cross.

CHAPTER III

ST. HELENA. THE LABARUM

1. THE EARLIER PORTION OF HELENA'S LIFE

St. Helena was born in 248, the year in which Rome kept the thousandth anniversary of its foundation. Three cities fight for the glory of having furnished her her birthplace.[1] York and Colchester base their claim on an obscure and dubious passage of a panegyric preached before Constantine and Maximian by an unknown orator[2]; Treves relies on the anything but reliable document which does service as the title of the Holy Coat; in point of fact, St. Helena was born at Drepane, a little seaport near Nicomedia in Bithynia, lying at the entrance of the Astacinus Gulf opposite Byzantium. Procopius, writing in the fifth century, states that "in Bithynia there is a town which bears the name of Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. It is said that Helena was born there at a time when the place was but a village, and that Constantine, in memory of his mother's childhood, raised it to the rank of a city."[3] Procopius indeed forgets to name the city in question; but this point is cleared up by St. Jerome, who says: "Constantine, when restoring Drepane, a city of Bithynia, in honour of the martyr Lucian, who was

[1] See the texts in *Acta SS.* 18th August. *De S. Helena vidua imperatrice.*

[2] *Incerti panegyr.*; *P.L.* viii. This view has been ably refuted by Toupin, *Hist. de S. Hélène*, p. 309.

[3] Procopius, *de Ædificiis*, v. 2.

buried there, gave it his mother's name, and called it Helenopolis."[1] Cassiodorus confirms the testimony of Procopius and St. Jerome.[2]

The child received the names of Flavia, Julia, Helena.[3] We can afford to smile when Baronius[4] and certain English authors make her out to be a descendant of the British king Coel,[5] or when Valois states that she belonged to the *gens Julia* founded by Æneas.[6] On the contrary, she seems to have been of humble stock; in fact, to have been the daughter of an innkeeper at Drepane.[7] St. Ambrose, who was well acquainted with the imperial family, thrice describes the empress thus: "The good hostess, *stabularia*, who at such great pain seeks the stable of the Lord. The good hostess, who preferred to be despised that she might gain Christ. That is why God drew her from her low position and raised her to the empire."[8]

At the age of twenty-five she was still looking after her father's business.[9] We still have some knowledge of her appearance about this period. As a frontispiece to his work, M. Lucot[10] gives an illustration of a splendid medal, which is now in the British Museum. Here Helena, though already *Augusta*, is represented with the features of a woman about thirty

[1] Jerome, *Chronicon*, an. 330; *P.L.* xxvii. col. 675.

[2] Cassiod. *Historia*, ii. 18; *P.L.* lxix. col. 936.

[3] According to the bronze coins studied by de Witte. *Revue numismatique*, 1843, p. 101.

[4] *Annals*, anno 306.

[5] *Acta SS. loc. cit.*

[6] Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. i. p. 60.

[7] Ambrose, *De obitu Theodosii*; *P.L.* xvi. col. 1399.

[8] *Loc. cit.*

[9] Nicephorus Callistus, *H.E.* viii.; *P.G.* cxlvi. 11; Ambrose, *loc. cit.*

[10] *Sainte Hélène mère de l'empereur Constantin.* Paris: Plon, 1873.

years old. This might lead one to suppose that the head is a fancy one, but when we note the curious resemblance between her features as shown here, and those of Constantine as shown in his statues and medals, we can see that the artist confined himself to making his model appear younger than she was.

The profile belongs to a very pure Greek type. The head, which is encircled by a band, is elegant, intelligent, and refined. In her eyes we see firmness, quietude, and energy. M. Lucot especially admires her thin, tightened lips, which show that she was accustomed to make herself obeyed. The obverse depicts Helena with an infant on her left arm, whilst with her right hand she is giving a fruit to a naked boy.[1] Though rather short in stature, she appears well built. Looking at her portrait we can understand that a woman of such a stamp, though doubtless flattered and sought after by men, cared but little for the vain pleasures commonly desired by her sex.

The saint's chaste romance began in 273. Helena was twenty-five when there came to Drepane a young commanding officer, who was two years her junior, Constantius, surnamed Chlorus—*i.e.* the pale-faced.[2] Constantius was born in 250, and was the son of the Dardanian Eutropius and of Claudia, niece of the Emperor Claudius II., the Gothic. He was made an officer of the prætorian guards, and rapidly rose to a higher rank. When he came to Drepane he had just finished a war against Zenobia, queen of Palmyra. He was known to be somewhat fastidious, but well educated, and amiable in his ways.[3] His small fortune

[1] The superscription is *Pietas Augusta.*

[2] "Yellow" would be a more correct, if less elegant, rendering of *Chlorus.*

[3] Duruy, vol. vi. p. 543.

had earned him the nickname of the Pauper.[1] At a time when licence reigned everywhere supreme, his chastity was considered so remarkable that the unknown author of the panegyric, read before Constantine and Maximian, set him up as an example on which it would not be possible to improve.[2] His understanding was in no way overclouded by passions, but hung in that intermediate region between naturalism and faith which has been called spiritualism. Eusebius of Cæsarea states that "he admitted the existence of one sole God, and loathed the impiety of those who worshipped idols."[3] Had he espoused a believer he would probably have become a convert to Christianity.

Nicephorus Callistus states that Constantius Chlorus came to Drepane at the head of a brilliant embassy; that Diocletian had sent him to make a treaty of peace with the barbarians of anterior Asia;[4] that both Helena and her father were as dazzled by the splendour of his retinue as Constantius by the beauty of Helena; that Constantius assured the father of his safety, gave the young woman an embroidered robe edged with the imperial purple, and that immediately the girl was his.[5]

With a little criticism Nicephorus, a Byzantine monk of the fourteenth century, might have saved himself from writing such a farrago of nonsense as the above. In 273 Aurelian, not Diocletian, was emperor. Helena was then a woman, not a girl, as she is here represented. Constantius was an officer, not a diplomatist, and his business was to fight, not to make

[1] A. de Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 188. This writer gives as his references Claud. cap. iii.;—Suidas, *voce* πανύπερ.

[2] *Incerti panegyricus*; *P.L.* viii. 610 *ff.*

[3] Eus. *de Vita Constantini*, i. 17; *P.G.* xx. 933.

[4] Nic. Cal. *H.E.* viii. 2; *P.G.* cxlvi. 11.

[5] *Ibid.*

treaties. In other words, we must strike out from the above account the embassy, the retinue, and consequently also the mutual surprise of the parties; in other words, the whole account may be dismissed as worthless.

Another monk, Berengosus, tells us that Helena and Constantius first met at the inn. With charming naiveté he adds: "Constantius loved the blessed virgin Helena on account of her very great beauty."[1] But it is scarcely probable that the two, whose prudence and high-mindedness we know, should have thus struck up their acquaintance.

We may now state our own hypothesis, taking into account all the data we have at our disposal: the campaign of 273, Constantius staying at a poor inn, his chastity, and the beauty and dignity of the woman. Drepane, in a sense, might be said to lie on the road from Palmyra to Rome, though really its only attraction is that of any little seaside bathing resort. It may be assumed that Constantius, on his way back from the expedition against Zenobia, came to the inn at Drepane to restore his health, which had suffered either from wounds or from the fatigues of the journey. Here he felt the charm of the bodily beauty and of the pure soul of Helena. Considering that he could never be happy apart from this young woman he, like any man of honour, offered the poor provincial girl his hand and a share in the fortune to which, as an emperor's nephew, he had a claim.

We now reach a certain hotly contested question. Roman matrimonial custom sanctioned two usages: there was, of course, the *justæ nuptiæ* or real legal marriage; but besides this there was an inferior state, the marriage according to the natural law, then

[1] Berengosus, *De Inventione Crucis*, iii. 1; *P.L.* clx. 965.

commonly called concubinage, but in reality corresponding with that we now term a morganatic marriage; marriage relations between unmarried folk went by the name of *stuprum*. A woman united to a man by the second species of union was described as *concubina*, *amica*, *convictrix*; she did not bear the name of matron, nor did she share her husband's titles; he was hers only *quoad mensam et thorum*.[1] There was no settlement to protect the fortune of the woman, nor was there any written agreement. The child of such a union, *nothus*, was a natural child, and though his father was known, he had no right of succession. This concubinage was recognised and tolerated by the law, and implied no slur on a woman's character.[2]

The law of the Twelve Tables forbade marriage between patricians and plebeians. This prohibition had indeed fallen by the Canuleia enactment; but public feeling was stronger than the letter of the law, and allowed of no infringements. Hence concubinage was popular. It was in the interests of plebeian women that they should accept this *modus vivendi*, which allowed of their being united with the noblemen they loved.

Had Roman law forbidden divorce, then indeed between the state of legal marriage and concubinage there would have been a vast difference; but we must remember that separation of the spouses could occur in both states, and that the only distinction made between the two forms of union was that, whilst a matron could only be dismissed by the presentation of the *libellum repudii*, duly registered by the public

[1] Troplong, *Influences de christianisme sur le droit romain*, pp. 238-240.

[2] Paul. i. 144. *De verb. signific.*

notary, a simple concubine could be dismissed without any such formality.

As a matter of fact, legal concubinage was a better institution than its name, which now bears an odious meaning, would imply; and the Church, who scorned legal subtleties, treated concubinage as real marriage when cases of conscience arose. "He who has no wife but a concubine whom he treats as a wife shall not be excluded from communion," so runs a canon enacted by the Council of Toledo, A.D. 400,[1] and re-enacted by the Councils of Mainz (851) and of Tibur (895).[2]

It was to this inferior sort of union that Helena resigned herself.[3] Zosimus states that "Constantine was born of a woman of humble estate who had not been joined in wedlock with the Emperor Constantius."[4] He says again of Constantine that "he was brought into the world by a *woman, not by a matron.*"[5]

M. Toupin[6] waxes wroth with what he terms an infamous insinuation concocted by a pagan; but we must bear in mind that Zosimus wrote in the fifth century, and that in his eyes the inferior married state was not immoral; moreover, he does no more than repeat what other good chroniclers had said before. Eusebius, for instance, who died in 338, and

[1] Council of Toledo, canon xviii. *Cp. Capitulare Pippini*, an. 793, cap 34 (Baluze, i. 540); *Capitularium*, lib. vii. 59; Bal. i. 1039. Concubinage in the Theodosian Code is described as *conjugium inæquale*; in the Justinian Code as *licita consuetudo*. [See a curious instance in Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London: Kegan Paul, 1907, p. 197 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

[2] Duruy, *op. cit.* vol. vi. p. 544, note.

[3] De Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 189, note 1.

[4] Zosimus, *Hist.* ii. 8.

[5] Zosimus, *Hist.* ii. 9.

[6] *Hist. de sainte Hélène*, note c, p. 319.

was a contemporary, in fact a friend, of the emperor, states frankly that "Constantine was brought forth by the concubine Helena."[1] Eutropius, a former secretary of Constantine, speaks likewise of "Constantine, whom Constantius had begotten in an inferior union."[2] St. Ambrose, with greater delicacy, says that St. Helena "still kept the inn when she first *had relations* with Constantius, *her master*."[3] The Bishop of Milan avoids making use of the words "marriage" and "husband," for which reason the Benedictine fathers, who edited his works, came to the decision that Helena and Constantius were not joined in lawful wedlock.[4] Lastly, the Alexandrian Chronicle describes Constantine as a natural child.

In spite of these decisive texts the Bollandists and M. Toupin will have it that there was a legal marriage. They point to the words used by Julian the Apostate (in the *Acts of the martyr Artemius*): "We it was that should have ascended the throne. My father was the son of Constantius Chlorus and Theodora, whereas Constantine was the child of a previous marriage with Helena, a woman of low condition, scarcely more than a harlot."[5] But this text goes against those who use it, for Julian claims his right of succession against the descendants of his grandfather's first marriage. In other words, he implicitly states that the children of this first marriage had no legal standing, because it was not a marriage at all in the legal sense.

[1] Constantinus ex concubina Helena procreatus. Quoted in *Acta SS.* 18th August. *De S. Helena.*

[2] *Brev. Hist. Rom.* x. 2.

[3] Stabulariam hanc primo fuisse asserunt sic cognitam Constantio seniori. *De Obitu Theodosii*; *P.L.* xvi. 1399.

[4] *Op. S. Ambrosii*, vol. ii. p. 1210.

[5] Vix non scorto. *Acta SS.* 20th October. *De S. Artemio Martyre.*

Those who defend Helena's marriage also bring forward a panegyric in which Eumenius speaks of Constantine as "his father's lawful successor,"[1] and an inscription on a monument at Naples, which is dedicated to "Our right pious and most clement sovereign Helena, Augusta . . . spouse of the divine Constantius."[2]

But such pieces of official adulation are worthless for our purpose. Who would have been so impertinent as to parade before the world the private scandals of the imperial family, or have the boldness to inscribe them on a public monument, or to speak of them in a panegyric?

On the authority of the preface to the Arabic canons of the Nicene Council, some historians[3] have seen fit to state of Helena that she was born a Christian. Theodoretus[4] likewise praises her for having worshipped God all her life; but Eusebius, who knew the emperor so well, ascribes to Constantine the conversion of his mother in her old age.[5] The Bollandists on this point agree with Eusebius. Had Helena been a Christian in 273 she would not have consented to being united with Constantius in the inferior married state,[6] nor would she have allowed her children to be brought up as pagans.

[1] *Panegyricus*; *P.L.* viii. 625.

[2] Gruterus, *Inscriptiones antiquæ*, p. 1086. It may also be found in the *Acta SS.* 18th August.

[3] Darras, *Hist. générale de l'Église*, vol. ix. p. 10; Toupin, *op. cit.* p. 311.

[4] *H.E.* i. 17; *P.G.* lxxxii. 957.

[5] Eus. *de Vita Constantini*, iii.; *P.G.* xx. 1108.

[6] [This, as it stands, is incorrect. See Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs* (English trans.), p. 197 *ff.* She would, however, have been hindered from marrying Constantius by the law then in force against mixed marriages.]

Had she been a Christian she would, almost certainly, have effected the conversion of Constantius, having regard to the sterling qualities of the latter. No, the probabilities stand for the contrary supposition. In all likelihood it was Constantius who began in her the work which finally led to her conversion. From him she may have learnt that the gods of her fathers only stood for symbols of nature, and sometimes too of human vices; that the real Ruler of the world was an invisible Spirit, which pervades the whole universe. Little by little, in this wise, we can conceive of her being led to know that Unknown God whom St. Paul had preached at Athens.

Constantius seems to have taken Helena with him to Naissus in Dardania or Troad, where was his family seat, and there Constantine was born on 18th February 274.[1] Possibly he was not with the young woman at the time of her confinement,[2] for we find him in that same year leading the Roman armies to their victory at Windisch over the Allemani, who had invaded the empire and pushed their way as far as Umbria. For eighteen years he lived faithful to the feelings of a husband and a father. He alone remained true to his love, whilst all around him legally contracted patrician marriages were being dissolved. He had become known as one of Rome's best generals; and had his character been less noble he would certainly have set about contracting a marriage in law with some patrician heiress; but such was his stamp of mind that he preferred to all others the poor girl he had first loved, and in whose society alone he found happiness. Diocletian had given him

[1] De Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 188.

[2] See in Nicephor. Callist. *H.E.* viii. 2, the tale he tells of a wonder which attended Constantine's conception.

orders to repel the Sarmatians, who were laying waste the Chersonesus. He carried out these instructions, and had just returned as a conqueror to his home, when there came an imperial message, which, with all its munificence, spelt the ruin of the homely life which he had lived so long.

2. THE YOUTH OF CONSTANTINE

Diocles, the son of a former slave, and himself a mere adventurer, but for all that a man of great power of will, when he had assumed the purple under the name of Diocletian understood plainly that he would not be able to govern all by himself the great Roman world. Accordingly (1st May 286), he associated to himself Maximian, another soldier, such as he had been; but to show that he intended being the predominant partner, and by way of proving his devotion to Jupiter, he took the name of Jovian, whilst to Maximian he gave that of Hercules. In the event, the burden of the empire proved too great even for two, and the sovereigns were later on driven to establish what has since been called the tetrachy. They assumed the title of *Augusti*, Diocles keeping for himself the East, and settling at Nicomedia; Maximian Hercules taking charge of the West, with Milan as his headquarters; but each one chose an associate as his lieutenant, the latter bearing the title of Cæsar, and possessing the right of succeeding the Augustus to whom he acted as subordinate. Hereditary succession was abolished, and Rome having become too hot for its rulers, remained the capital of the empire only in name. The new constitution was proclaimed on 1st March 292. Diocles appointed Galerius as Cæsar, whilst Constantius Chlorus was

notified of his nomination as Cæsar to Maximian; he was to take up his residence at Treves, and to see to the administration of Gaul and Great Britain. His post was, therefore, the frontier post, the place of danger and of honour, for it was the northern frontiers particularly that were threatened by the rising tide of the barbarians issuing from the depths of Germany.

But at this period political promotions required certain precautionary measures, which it was usual to disguise under the pretence of friendship. Diocles, knowing the great love of Constantius for his son, gave out that he himself would undertake the boy's education; in other words, that he intended keeping the youngster as a hostage at Nicomedia. Nor was this Diocletian's only measure: he also insisted that the two Cæsars should dismiss their wives, in order that Galerius might espouse his (Diocletian's) daughter Valeria, and that Constantius Chlorus might marry Flavia Maxima Theodora, Maximian's daughter-in-law.[1] His hope was that the Cæsars by thus becoming sons-in-law to the *Augusti* would respect the crown and the lives of their wives' fathers. The offer was made in so imperative a tone[2] that there would have been danger in refusing it, so there being nothing else to do, Constantius Chlorus was compelled to put away the woman of his heart and be wedded to Theodora.

St. Helena concealed her grief and disgrace so well, and her retreat from the scene was so dignified and complete, that historians are driven to all kinds of expedients to account for her disappearance. Nearly all the suggestions which they have made are open to

[1] Aurelius Victor, *de Cæs. in Diocletian.*

[2] Eutropius, *Hist. Rom.* ix.

criticism. The Bollandists speak of a tradition,[1] according to which she went to live in the Belgian province. We are told that Hesdin owes its name to her.[2] In the seventeenth century some ruins at Bonn were still pointed out as those of her castle. An English historian[3] surmises that she actually went to Treves, where Constantius built her a palace. Had he done so, by bringing his divorced wife into his province he would have laid himself open to the suspicion of adultery. Nicephorus Callistus seems better inspired when he states that Constantius merely saw that the position of his first wife was made secure, and then left her where she would not have to fear the jealousy of his second wife, nor suffer from any want.[4] As Constantine was a ward of Diocletian's it seems probable that Helena stayed near him, he being the only creature whom she was still allowed to love. A mother would not willingly leave a child who is being kept as a hostage.

According to Lactantius, Diocletian had a mania for building, and sought to make of Nicomedia a rival of Rome.[5] The emperor, when he had conceived the wish of constructing a palace, a circus, a mint, an arsenal, and houses for his wife and daughter, proceeded to expel the people out of entire districts of the city, the result being that the place, all deserted and demolished, soon put on the appearance of a city which had been taken by storm. At the beginning of his reign he was tolerant enough, and gave complete freedom to the Christians. "The emperors," writes

[1] *Acta SS.* 18th August. *S. Helena,* cap. iv.
[2] Helenæ dunum.
[3] Alford, *Brit. illust.* an. 292.
[4] Niceph. Call. *H.E.* viii. 2; *P.G.* cxlvi. 14.
[5] *De morte persecutorum* vii.; *P.L.* vii. 205.

Eusebius of Cæsarea, "gave to several of the faithful the post of provincial governors, without demanding of them that they should sacrifice to the gods. They allowed officers to worship publicly with their wives and children and slaves, even when the princes themselves were present; bishops were in honour, and churches were rising in every town." [1]

About the year 290 a university was founded at Nicomedia, and here Lactantius taught Latin eloquence. Constantine, who was then about eighteen years of age, probably attended his lectures;[2] at any-rate he must have struck up an acquaintance with him, since later on, in 317, he appointed Lactantius tutor to his son. As Lactantius soon after became a convert to Christianity, it is probable that the atmosphere in which Constantine and his mother lived was, to say the least, not antagonistic to Christianity. A church had been erected near the palace,[3] and who knows whether Helena did not occasionally enter it when returning from a visit to her son, whether she did not recognise in the teaching she there heard the fulfilment of her husband's dreams, and whether her suffering heart did not glean consolation when she heard those words, so painful to the pagan: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"?

Diocles soon became fond of Cæsar's son, and took him with him to the wars. When on an expedition to Egypt against Achilleus, A.D. 296, he passed through Palestine, Eusebius, who saw Constantine riding at his side, was much impressed by the good bearing of the youth, by his beauty, by his shapely

[1] Eus. *H.E.* viii. 6.
[2] Eus. *de Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. or *P.L.* viii. 19.
[3] Lactantius, xii.; *P.L.* vii. 213.

body, and his strength.[1] In every way his was a superior mind. Issued from a line of soldiers, he instinctively understood the business of war; it is not surprising, under the circumstances, that Diocles made him, even before 305, a tribune of the first class; the legionaries adored their young general, who besides being brave, was always affable and kind.[2]

Other good qualities of Constantius reappeared in Constantine as time went on, especially the virtue of chastity,[3] then so unusual a quality that Lactantius describes him as a very pure young man. Under the circumstances it was easy to foresee the future. Maximian being desirous of getting the power into his family, betrothed him to his daughter Fausta, a girl of exceptional beauty.[4] A picture of the period, which was exhibited at the palace of Aquileia, depicted the lady offering him a golden helmet adorned with diamonds.[5] But Diocles opposed the projected marriage, fearing, no doubt, that the double alliance of Constantius and of Constantine with a daughter-in-law and a daughter of the Milanese Augustus would lead to the breaking away of the western empire.

Ambitious dreams then gave way for prosaic reality. Constantine had to resign himself to entering the inferior state of wedlock with a poor girl of humble birth named Minervina,[6] who presented him with a boy, Crispus, born about the year 296 according to

[1] Eus. *Vita Cons.*; *P.L.* viii. 19.

[2] Lact. xviii.; *P.L.* vii. 223.

[3] *Incerti panegyricus*, iv.; *P.L.* viii. 657.

[4] So Julian the Apostate, *Disc.* i. 6. Quoted by Duruy, vol. vii. p. 12, note 1.

[5] *Pan. Vet.* vi.; *P.L.* viii. 613.

[6] Zonaras, *Annals*, xiii. 2; *P.G.* cxxxiv. 1105; Zosimus, *Hist.* ii. 20.

Ducange, about 298 according to Godescard, about 300 according to Tillemont.

The object of this early marriage was the preservation of the husband's morality. It was felt that the discipline of married life would save him from experiencing the vague desires of the flesh.[1] Such a preoccupation, it seems, only befits a mother who is anxious for the future and for the dignity of her son. Helena probably sought for one who should be at once beautiful and chaste and faithful, and such could be found only among the humble. Certainly no one could need a wife of this character more than Constantine, for was he not a hostage surrounded by prying, jealous eyes, and reduced by necessity to a reserve which his panegyrists mistook of inborn prudence?[2]

Everyone knows how Diocletian finally gave way to Galerius in the matter of religious tolerance, and started, by a decree of the 24th February 303, the era of the martyrs. This persecution raged more especially at Nicomedia; from the windows of the palace Constantine may have witnessed the destruction of the church, and the massacres. Boiling with indignation, he was imprudent enough to exclaim publicly: "What folly, what utter blindness, for men to declare war on God."[3] Forthwith he became a marked man. Only the fact of his being the son of Constantius and a favourite of the emperor saved him from death, and the favour of the latter he was soon to lose.

In 305 Diocletian and Maximian Hercules, in order to prevent civil war, both abdicated,[4] and the two

[1] *Incerti panegyricus*, 4.; *P.L.* viii. 612.

[2] Eus. *de Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. or *P.L.* viii. 19.

[3] *Constantini oratio ad sanctorum cœtum*, xxv.; *P.L.* viii. 473.

[4] Lact. *de morte pers.* xviii.

Cæsars, Galerius and Constantius, became Augusti. Constantius being far away was not consulted as to the measures to be taken. Galerius, in order to retain for himself the highest place in the tetrarchy, appointed two of his tools, who like him were bitterly opposed to the Christians, to be Cæsars: Flavius Severus, a debauched dancer and drunkard, who used to turn night into day,[1] and Maximin Daia, his sister's son, a young semi-barbarian, who had left his native woods and his flocks to join the army.[2] To the wonder of all, especially of the soldiers, he gave no appointment to Constantine, because he was his rival's son and a scorner of his cruelties.

It was now Constantine's turn to be threatened, and Helena and Minervina could only wait in fear and trembling. Aurelius Victor states explicitly that Galerius treated him as a hostage on religious grounds.[3] It seems that it entered into God's mysterious plans that the pagan whose heart had melted at the sight of the sufferings of His saints should be himself treated as a Christian, so that the distance which separated him from them might be easier to cross when the hour of resolution struck.

Galerius was a man of dreadful cruelty. According to Lactantius "everything seemed to him fit to be burnt, to be crucified, to be thrown to the beasts. His officers and his servants he chastised with the spear. He considered it a gracious act to allow of a man being beheaded, and many and great were the past services required to obtain for one the privilege of such a death."[4] Though he was bound to be

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* xviii.
[2] *Ibid.* xix.
[3] Aurelius Victor, *de Cæs.* (Constant.).
[4] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxii.

careful with his colleague's son, who was the soldiers' idol, yet he was continually attempting to ensnare him. Sometimes, by praising his strength and agility, he would get him to descend into the arena to fight the beasts ;[1] at other times he would compliment him on his bravery, and so induce him to fight in single combat with some gigantic Sarmatian ; or again, when hunting, he would make him walk first into a morass to locate the chase.[2] But Providence watched over the young tribune, and he came scathless out of his many trials.

Constantius Chlorus acted very differently, and was eminently tolerant. He pretended not to notice that at Treves there were Christians among the magistrates and among his own courtiers.[3] Certain priests whose presence he tolerated openly prayed for his safety, and celebrated Mass in his palace.[4] Being a subordinate, he had been obliged to execute to some extent, and even to countersign the decrees of his colleagues in the tetrarchy. Lactantius, with some irony, writes of him that "for fear of seeming to disobey the orders of those above him, he suffered a few meeting-places to be pulled down—that is, he allowed this to be done to those walls which might be easily rebuilt, but he preserved intact the real temple which is in men."[5]

Constantius was a man of gentle habits, who had at least some idea of God, so that it is not surprising if in after times he has come to be considered as a Christian. Eusebius thus describes his state of mind[6] :

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* ; xxiv. *P.L.* vii. 233.
[2] De Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 191.
[3] Eus. *de Vita Const.* ; *P.G.* xx. 927.
[4] *Op. cit.*
[5] *De morte pers.* xv. ; *P.L.* vii. 217.
[6] *De Vita Constantini* ; *P.G.* xx. 931-934.

"During his whole reign, being a just and tolerant sovereign, he consecrated to God, the sovereign of all, his family, his spouse, his children, and all his servants, so much so that those who dwelt in his palace scarcely differed from the Church of God." But between Natural and Revealed Religion there is a gulf, and Constantius never crossed it. He never would allow the name of Christ to be mentioned in his hearing.

Even when he had assumed the purple he still had a claim to his old title of the Pauper, which we can afford to render as the Upright. Never did he put his hand to the public treasury, of which he considered himself as the guardian.[1] According to Eutropius "so humble was his daily life that on the occasion of feasts, when he had to entertain an unusually large number of guests, he was forced to beg from door to door of his acquaintances the silver plate for use on his table. The Gauls not merely loved, but actually idolised him, for he had saved them for the savagery of Maximian."

When he had reached the age of fifty-five his health commenced to fail, and he began to think of the inevitable. Six children had been born to him by Theodora. The eldest of these children was only ten years of age. The power for which he had sacrificed all would at his death depart from his family. He also thought of the hatred of Galerius, of his son Constantine, who was now at the tyrant's mercy, but who, if he could only be brought to Treves, might save the whole situation. He accordingly sent letters to Nicomedia imploring his colleague to send him his son that he might embrace him once again before dying.[2]

[1] Eutrop. *Breviarium historiæ Romanæ*, x. 1.
[2] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxiv.

Galerius, who had an inkling of Constantine's ambitions,[1] much disliked the idea of his departure;[2] in fact, he had disregarded previous letters of Constantius to the same effect; but this time Galerius gave way. His doing so was a matter of surprise to everyone; and some chroniclers are of opinion that he only yielded before Constantine's threat to free himself forcibly by the aid of his army. It must not be forgotten that Galerius was ailing, and that he could have defended himself only with difficulty. At any-rate he outwardly gave his consent to his ward's departure, and handed him a brief empowering him to requisition horses on the road, strictly cautioning him, however, not to leave before the morrow, when he would receive his final instructions. Galerius hoped that during the night he would succeed in finding some pretext for detaining the youth, and that in the delay he would have time to send a special courier to Severus, the Cæsar of Milan.[3] It would have been dangerous to attack Constantine so long as he was surrounded by his own troops, but Severus was to be advised to fall upon him at one of his resting-places beyond the Alps.

Night was falling. Galerius, excusing himself on the score of his poor health, retired to his sleeping apartment. Constantine whilst supping recalled the different incidents of the day; instinctively he felt that the least delay would compromise his freedom, and possibly result in the loss of his life.[4] He accordingly resolved on immediate action. Taking advantage of the emperor's absence he hurriedly finished his supper, embraced Minervina, and took his departure.[5]

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxiv.
[2] Zosimus, *Hist.* ii. 8.
[3] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxiv.
[4] Eus. *de vita Const.* i. 20.
[5] Lact. xxiv.

He crossed the Bosphorus in a boat, and then, to prevent pursuit, according to Lactantius, he requisitioned all the horses available, or, as Zosimus has it,[1] mutilated all the horses he did not require. The next morning Galerius pretended to awake later than usual, and the first thing he did was to send for Constantine. Soon news was brought of the hurried departure and of the injury done to the horses, and Galerius, in his vexation at being outdone, could scarcely restrain his tears.[2]

Duruy informs us that he disbelieves the tale of this flight, which it would have been so easy to prevent, and of this expectation of Galerius that Severus would shut the Alpine passes, whereas it would have been so much easier for Galerius himself to have shut the gates of Nicomedia.[3] But Duruy forgets that any attempt on Constantine by Galerius would have fired the troops. It is no paradox to say that it was an easier matter to shut the far-off passes than the gates of Nicomedia. Personally, I believe the story of this flight, for it is testified to not only by Eusebius and Lactantius, but also by Zosimus, who certainly was not over-sympathetic to Constantine. The very fact that Galerius wished to smother his dangerous young rival confirms the story of the escape.

Constantine hurried at all speed from Byzantium to the borders of Gaul.[4] All along his road, in Thracia, in Noricum, in the higher regions of the Danube, crosses stood, and piles flared away—in a word, every torture was being applied to the Christians. In many places the villages were deserted,

[1] *Hist.* ii. 8.

[2] Vix lacrymas tenebat. Lact. *de morte pers.* xxiv.

[3] Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. p. 6.

[4] At ille incredibili celeritate usus. Lact. *ib.*

and the survivors were hiding among the mountains and in caves.[1] Not until he arrived in Gaul could he find a trace of peace.[2]

Constantius was at Gessoricum (Boulogne), engaged in embarking an army for Great Britain, when Constantine arrived. The expedition against the Picts was successful, and Constantine, who accompanied his father as his lieutenant, made himself known and loved by the legionaries. This had been precisely the object which Constantius wished to attain. He died at Eboracum (York), 25th July 306, commending Constantine to the care of his soldiers, and Theodora and his children to that of Constantine. Nicomedia was at the other end of the known world. Constantine, who, though young, had already made himself a name, had taken his father's place at the head of the army; can we wonder, then, that the soldiers proclaimed him *Augustus*?[3] But as in the tetrarchy the son had no right to succeed to his father, this proclamation was an infringement of the law, and, in in fact, a *coup d'état*. In accordance with Roman custom,[4] Constantine beforehand had promised his soldiers magnificent presents.[5]

3. St. Helena's Conversion

Constantine proved to be inclined to moderation.

[1] *Acta S. Floriani. Acta SS.* 4th May. *De S. Floriano principe officii*, etc.; De Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 193.

[2] According to Lactantius, Constantine found his father at the last extremity. Constantius died peacefully, commending his son to the soldiers, and leaving him all his power.

[3] Eus. *Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 938.

[4] Zosimus, ii. 9.

[5] The military revolution spoils the argument of Gibbon, who proved Helena's marriage by the fact of Constantine succeeding Constantius.

Instead of breaking loose from the tetrarchy he politely notified Galerius of his election, and in accordance with the usual custom sent him his image crowned with laurel, also begging that his legions might be pardoned for their hurry in nominating him their emperor.[1] This was a capital way of forcing his claim, and Galerius had at least the grace to pretend that he willingly ratified the soldiers' choice. But in his reply he carefully avoided bestowing on Constantine the title of *Augustus*, and merely styled him Cæsar, thus putting him in the fourth rank, below Maximin Daia, and under the orders of Severus.[2]

Constantine was far-sighted enough to accept this arrangement. He settled at Treves, which was the headquarters of the Prefect of Gaul and of his own governing staff. Helena, Crispus, and possibly Minervina too, soon joined him. Being, even more than his father, favourably disposed to the Christians, he issued a decree establishing freedom of conscience and of worship.[3] By so doing he practically cut himself adrift from the tetrarchy, and put himself above the decrees which had been countersigned by his father.

In 306 death claimed many victims in his family. Theodora, the widow of Constantius, who, judging by her medals, was a frail and weakly creature, did not long survive her husband. Minervina disappears from the scene of history so early that we may surmise that she died in Nicomedia. Helena became passionately attached to Crispus, Minervina's child. Evidently she had not yet received the grace of faith, for as yet she would not pardon Theodora and

[1] Eumenius, *Panegyr. Vet.*; vii. *P.L.* viii. 628.
[2] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxv.; *P.L.* vii. 235.
[3] Lact. xxiv.

her children for having been the occasion of her long separation from Constantius. The children of Constantius, whom Constantine had promised to protect, were sent away to Toulouse and confided to the care of rhetors.[1]

In money matters Constantine was less scrupulous than his father. He looked upon the treasury as his own property. Though he was the son of a barmaid and of an emperor who all his life had been poor, he succeeded in amassing immense wealth, and gave his mother a palace at Treves and lands in every part of his empire.[2]

Treves had been evangelised by Eucharius, Valerius and Maternus. As the Church had adopted for her purposes the civil division of the provinces, the Bishop of Treves was primate of Gaul. He is said to have possessed St. Peter's pastoral staff, which had been despatched by the prince of the Apostles that Eucharius might by means of it raise Maternus to life.[3] However, faith had here grown cold, and paganism was regaining lost ground.[4]

At Treves Helena and Constantine were far away from the good influence of Lactantius, and for a time the new Cæsar made no spiritual progress. Helena, now that her affliction had been removed, had opportunity to reflect on the mysterious plans of that God who puts down the mighty from their seat and exalts the humble. Grace, helped no doubt by her austerities, was rapidly making progress in her heart.

At this same time grave events were taking place

[1] De Broglie, *Constantin*, vol. ii. p. 98.

[2] Le Nain de Tillement, *Mémoires*, vol. vii. p. 2.

[3] Willems, *Der Hl. Rock zu Trier*, p. 158.

[4] *Acta SS. De S. Agricio sive Agræcio episcopo Trevirensi.* Jan. xiii.

beyond the Alps. Maxentius, the son-in-law of Galerius, got himself proclaimed *Augustus* in a prætorian revolution on October 28th, 306, and as his partner he chose his father, Maximian Hercules, who since his abdication had been living a retired life in the country. Severus had been sent by Galerius to punish the usurper, but having been first betrayed and abandoned by his own army and then attacked by the enemy, he opened his veins, and died at Ravenna.[1]

Maximian, fearing that Galerius might again take the offensive, set about finding friends and allies. He strengthened the defences of Rome, and went to Gaul to offer to Constantine the hand of his daughter Fausta, to whom he had been already once affianced.[2] The wedding took place at Arles, the Gallic Rome, where Constantine reassumed on the 31st March 307 the title of Augustus. Maximian returned to Italy without having obtained the help he had hoped for. Galerius now marched against him, but with no better success than Severus, and was obliged to return to Nicomedia.

Helena, who had never overcome her dislike for Theodora, was not at all pleased to see her rival's sister united in marriage to her son. "It is highly probable," writes M. de Broglie,[3] "that Fausta with her family and Helena with Crispus formed two hostile groups at the court, both striving to obtain the upper place in the sovereign's heart and mind." Constantine had long appeared to value above all his mother's and his eldest boy's affection, but youth and beauty will tell even against love for a mother.

Fausta was a thorough pagan, and the daughter

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxvi.
[2] Lact. *ib.* xxvii.
[3] *Constantin,* vol. i. p. 99.

of a persecutor, and as such she was firmly attached to the gods, those protectors of pleasure and of the easy life. Helena, on the contrary, grew ever more enamoured of the spiritual God of Constantius Chlorus. Zonaras thus describes the state of mind of the emperor: "Belonging to the religion of the Gentiles, and, for all that, cherished by the Christians, he was urged to idolatry by his spouse." [1]

Two voices were entreating him, but he preferred to listen to the one which spoke to the more sensual side of his nature. He may have been tolerant towards the Christians, but he was exceptionally propitious to the pagans, doubtless to humour the whims of his wife. Eumenius was able to say to him: "Every temple has its attractions for thee, but especially that of Apollo. . . . By thy liberality the temples have been beautifully restored. . . . All around, cities and temples are rising from their ruins." [2] The head of his family, Claudius II., had dedicated his house to the Sun, symbolised by the fair-haired Phœbus; and Eumenius, when addressing Constantine in 310, was still so sure of that emperor's fidelity to the worship of his great-uncle that he ventures to speak of his "own cherished Apollo." [3] The *Augustus* of Treves was farther off from the True God than had been the tribune of Nicomedia.

The last of the persecutors were a strange set of men. They were ferocious towards the Christians, they had no pity for mankind, they betrayed their own families, their only thought was of self, their only motive for acting, their own brutal appetites.

[1] Zonaras, *Annals*, xiii. 1; *P.G.* cxxxiv. 1098.

[2] Eumenius, *Paneg. Vet.* 21, 22; *P.L.* viii. 637 *f.*

[3] Apollinem tuum. See Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. p. 51 *sq.*

After the retreat of Galerius, Maximian began to think that he might as well reign alone ; he accordingly plotted to overthrow and slay his own son Maxentius, who had so generously given him a portion of the empire. But no sooner had the legionaries been made acquainted with these dastardly designs than they rose as a man, and put the traitor Maximian to flight.[1] Maxentius, unwilling to compass the death of his own father, banished him from Italy, whereupon Maximian went to live in Treves with Constantine, his son-in-law.

But no sooner had he settled in Gaul than he again began scheming. Constantius had embarked on a war against the Franks ; as soon as Maximian deemed him at a safe distance he proceeded to Arles, took possession of the war-chest, and with the money thus obtained bought over to his side the soldiery of the depot. Constantine, who had received information of these doings, probably from his mother, hastened back by forced marches, and captured Maximian at Marseilles (A.D. 308). Constantine on this occasion took no extreme measures against Maximian ; he merely reproached him for his treachery, and deprived him of the purple, incidentally pushing his contempt so far as to allow Maximian to dwell in his portion of the empire.[2]

In 310 the aged plotter again organised a conspiracy, this time with the avowed object of slaying his son-in-law during the night. He was indiscreet enough to take into his confidence Fausta, to whom he promised a better husband. Fausta, of course, betrayed the secret to Constantine, who on the night appointed made a eunuch sleep in his bed. Maximian entered the imperial bedroom, slew the

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxviii. [2] Lact. *ib.*

slave, and under the impression that he had killed the emperor, went forth filled with joy (*gloriabundus*). But outside he was met by Constantine and his guard, who promptly arrested him.[1] This time Maximian had gone too far, and it was decided that an end must be put to his villainous life.

Eusebius in his Church History, and Eumenius in his panegyric, suggest that Maximian committed suicide. On the other hand, Aurelius Victor states that he was formally condemned to death.[2] Lactantius furnishes us with the means of reconciling these two versions. "As a last favour he was left to choose the kind of death he preferred, and he hanged himself."[3] It was as good as a custom among the Romans that high dignitaries should, if condemned, have the privilege of what was called a good death. In other words, they were left to kill themselves.

Duruy[4] shows himself quite unusually well disposed towards the persecutor; he writes: "We shall not be far off from the truth if we surmise that this narrative was composed to hide the wickedness of the murder of an old man, who, being abandoned by all, was a danger to nobody, and whose grey hairs and long services should have been respected by his daughter's husband."

But what if his long services consisted in feeding the Coliseum beasts on the flesh of the Christians? His life had indeed been long, far too long if we measure it by the number of the martyrs whom he put to death. He had conspired against his son, and had twice plotted the overthrow of his son-in-law. He could not expect respect of those whom he had

[1] Lact. xxx. [2] Jure interierat.

[3] Lact. xxx. Zosimus, ii. 11, states that he died "morbo."

[4] *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. p. 16.

been ever ready to betray. At the period high treason was not a crime subject to ordinary judicial procedure; its punishment depended on the emperor. It seems a dreadful thing that a man should condemn his wife's father to death; but there can be no doubt that the pagan, Aurelius Victor, was right in saying that Maximian was executed in accordance with the law.

It was now the turn of Maxentius. Affecting to be horrified by his father's death, he declared war against his brother-in-law (A.D. 312).[1] Constantine retorted by overthrowing Maximian's statues.[2] Critics are at variance as to the real cause of this war.

Some have thought that the Christians of Rome had summoned Constantine to their aid. This supposition is a mistaken one. The persecution was evidently nearing its end. The emperors were just beginning, now that it was too late, to realise the wrongness of their tactics. Galerius on his death-bed had published (30th April 312) an edict of toleration, in which we find expressions which are in strange contrast to what we know of his life. "Our clemency should animate the Christians to pray to their God for our health, and for the prosperity of the State as well as for their own preservation."[3] Maxentius, on the whole, was not intolerant in matters of conscience.[4] Christians and pagans indiscriminately had had to suffer for his vices, but their rights were safeguarded by the public authority. Pope Miltiades was allowed to put in his claim for the Church property that had been confiscated in 304, and also to bring back to

[1] Lact. xliii.; *P.L.* vii. 259.
[2] Lact. xlii.
[3] Lact. xxxiv.
[4] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* viii. 14; *P.G.* xx. 781.

Rome the remains of his predecessor, who had died in Sicily.[1]

Lactantius gives a better explanation of the war. After the death of Severus, Galerius had promoted Licinius to be Augustus; Constantine, whose eyes were open, thereupon betrothed to Licinius his half-sister Constantia. Maximin Daia "immediately took alarm, and thinking that the two emperors were about to unite against him, he made friends with Maxentius, and roused him up to attack Constantine."[2]

In the tetrarchy the several emperors suspected and feared each other. Although they were all related either by consanguinity or affinity yet some evil genius was always there to incite them against each other. Maxentius thought the opportunity a good one to crush Constantine; his was the better army, for it comprised the prætorian guards, all picked men, the army of Severus which, as we saw above, had deserted and gone over to Maxentius, and also a large part of the army of Galerius, which had acted likewise. He could also count on the help of many contingents recruited in Africa and in Italy.[3] The force at his disposal numbered about 170,000 infantry and 18,000 cavalry, all of them regular, well-trained soldiers.[4]

Constantine had altogether only eight legions, of which four were required for the defence of the Rhine. Besides the four legions (30,000 men) which he could safely bring to the front, he had a number of irregulars from Gaul, Britain, and Germany. At the

[1] Allard, *Le Christianisme et l'Empire romain,* pp. 146-147.

[2] Lact. *de morte pers.* xliii.

[3] Some critics are of opinion that instead of "Africa" we should here read "Getulia."

[4] Zosimus, ii. 15.

most he may have had 90,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry, for the most part untrained men.

The two emperors paused before entering on their struggle. Both being pagans, both were to be reckoned among those who looked for prognostics in the food eaten by the sacred fowls. Maxentius had recourse to the most abominable forms of witchcraft. He had pregnant women dissected, and new-born children opened that their insides might be inspected; he launched lions against each other, and watched the result, and held consultations with the spirits of the nether world. In each and every case the result was lucky, and his victory was foretold.[1]

The echo of all this devilry soon reached Treves, and great indeed was the perturbation it aroused in Constantine,[2] whose credulity has been so well demonstrated by M. Boissier.[3] "The very harshness with which he treated the practice of the black art shows that he was afraid of it. He firmly believed in the power of incantation and in the evil eye. When he ordered the severe punishment of fortune-tellers and of those who gave love-potions, he was careful to make an exception for those who made use of charms for restoring the sick to health or for driving away storms of rain and hail.[4] He probably looked on these impostors as the benefactors of mankind. In 321, nine years after the defeat of Maxentius, he enacted that 'when a thunderbolt falls on a public monument, the aruspice shall be consulted in accordance with ancient custom, and that his reply

[1] Eus. *de Vita Const.* i. 36; *P.G.* xx; *Cp.* Cedrenus; *P.G.* cxxi. 518.

[2] Alexander monachus, *de inventione Crucis.* *P.G.* lxxxvii. 4054.

[3] *La fin du paganisme,* vol. i. p. 29.

[4] Theodosian Code, XVI. 10, 1.

shall be transmitted to the emperor.' This law puzzled Baronius, who could only explain it by supposing that Constantine reverted to paganism. Baronius was wrong; after his conversion Constantine remained firm, and never gave up his new faith, but both as a Christian and as a pagan he was always superstitious."

He too, accordingly, consulted the aruspices about his future, and ordered an examination of the bowels of the beasts sacrificed to the gods. The priests' answers were unsatisfactory: they could only predict disaster. Yet in spite of all these ill-omens he resolved on war.[1] What exactly was it that led him to this resolution? Whence came his courage? What induced him first to seek and then afterwards to despise the predictions of the pagans? This leads us to consider the question of St. Helena's conversion.

Hagiographical writers usually state that her conversion took place late in her life. This statement they make on the authority of Eusebius.[2] "Constantine merits to be proclaimed blessed on account of the great prosperity of his reign, and especially on account of his filial piety, for he made his mother, who until then had been a pagan, to be so pious and so well informed on matters of religion that she seemed to have been instructed by our Saviour Himself." The Bollandists infer from this that the conversion of the mother took place shortly after that of the son, which was effected in 312 by the apparition in the skies. At this time the empress would have been about sixty-five years of age.[3]

[1] Eumenius, *Paneg.* x.

[2] Eus. *de Vita Const.* iii. 47.

[3] *Acta SS.* 18th August. *S. Helena,* iv. *Sainte Helène,* 19.

On the contrary, Willems[1] is of opinion that Helena was really baptised at Treves, and that her conversion was the motive of Constantine's. This opinion seems much the more probable, and as the whole question is one of probabilities it may fairly be described as true.

In the first instance, Eusebius's text is full of the adulation we may expect from a courtier. Surely, for instance, his comparison of a mere man, even were he Constantine the Great, to our Saviour is the merest flattery. It is probable that through their intercourse with Constantius Chlorus, Constantine and Helena both became imbued with the tenets of theism, and that their later faith was built up on this ground; that Helena when she had lived down her earthly love was the first to ask for baptism, but that Constantine, whose only concern was his empire, hesitated as long as he could before adopting the austere practices of the Christian religion. A man who preferred to delay his baptism until he was on his death-bed, and then to receive it at the hands of an Arian bishop,[2] can surely not be described as an apostle of the faith.

Moreover, we must set against Eusebius the testimony of other contemporary writers who ascribe

[1] C. Willems, *Der Hl. Rock zu Trier*, p. 52.

[2] [*Philpin de Rivière, Constantin le Grand, son baptême et sa vie chrétienne* (Paris, 1907), endeavours to prove that Constantine was not baptised by Eusebius, but by Pope Silvester. The censure of the Migne edition of the works of St. Ambrose (*P.L.* xvi. col. 1399) may be quoted in this connection. It points out that the view according to which Constantine was baptised by Silvester is rejected by Eusebius, Jerome, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and others, so much so "ut mirum videatur adhuc exstare qui Constantinum a Silvestro papa baptizatus ex Actis apocryphis . . . obstinatius defendant."—*Trans.*]

Constantine's conversion to Helena. What is the meaning of the following passage from St. Paulinus of Nola?—"Constantine owed it as much to the faith of his mother as to his own that he was the first of Christian princes."[1] Does not St. Ambrose, too, presuppose Helena's influence when he exclaims[2]: "O woman above all others, who found and brought to the emperor far more than she had received from him." It is hopeless for the Bollandists to argue that the Bishop of Milan is contrasting the importance of the relics to the gold which was spent in securing them. M. Toupin rightly observes that St. Ambrose would not speak thus had Helena received from her son the faith—*i.e.* the most priceless of gifts. This opinion also agrees with the earliest tradition, which is thus voiced by Theodoretus: "The emperor's mother cast the brilliant light of faith over the world, and also led the soul of her son to piety."[3]

If we locate Helena's conversion in 313, the history of the fourth century becomes inexplicable, but if we suppose that she became a convert at Treves, then all the after events are clear. We may hypothetically reconstruct the dramatic scene when Constantine resolved, against all advice, on war. He stood between Fausta and Helena, between the old world which was crumbling away, and the new world then just coming into being—Fausta clasping his hands, those hands which had shed her father's blood, and which were anxious to shed also that of her brother, and beseeching him whom she loved in spite of all not to disregard the evil spells that had been cast by Maxentius, nor the bad omens descried by the

[1] Paulinus, *ep.* xxxi. *ad. Sev.* cap. iv.; *P.L.* lxi. 327.
[2] *De obitu Theodosii*; *P.L.* xvi. 1399.
[3] Theod. *H.E.* i. 17; *P.G.* lxxxii. 957.

heathen priests of Treves. On the other side Helena, standing erect, and smiling at the notion that aruspices could discern the future in the bowels of women and children, and exclaiming that one sign of the cross would be sufficient to put all the demons to flight, and then handing as a keepsake to Constantine a medal, on which was engraved the monogram of Christ. "Forward, and fear not," she cried. "Carry this in thy bosom, hung about thy neck; in this sign thou shalt be victorious"—*τούτῳ νίκα*. Constantine paused, he looked at the precious talisman, and quickly weighed the *pros* and *cons*, the relative power of God and of the gods, and then, giving way to the authority of his mother, and fired with some of her enthusiasm, he vows to wear the medal, and hurries off to mobilise his troops. This is the only natural and logical sequence of events.

Fausta doubtless made her way to the temple of Apollo to make an offering to the gods, whilst Helena followed slowly in the steps of her beloved son. With moistened eyes she gazed at the standards of the legions —they at least bore the semblance of the Cross—at the *vexilla* floating in the breeze, at the eagles, and the trophies of the maniples. Hugo of Flavigny in his chronicle[1] narrates of her that she rested at Besançon, and with her court attended the little church of St. Stephen to pray for Constantine's success.[2] "Everyone," writes Willems, "witnessed her tears and her fasts. She made a vow to rebuild the chapel, and afterwards did so." To say the least, Eusebius disregards several important points of the question.

[1] *Monumenta germ.* vol. viii. p. 298. Quoted by Willems, *op. cit.* p. 174.

[2] *Acta SS.* 18th August. § 10.

4. THE LABARUM

History has naught to recount of the march of Constantine's army from Treves to the Segusio Pass, near the Mont Cenis, and where history is silent fancy is free to build. M. Desroches believes that the various troops mustered at Autun, which was the point of juncture of the Roman roads in Gaul. He forgets that the legions were quartered along the northern frontiers, in the Belgian and Germanic provinces. In all probability the four legions and the German irregulars came together at Treves, their nearest centre, whilst the troops raised in Gaul hastened to effect a junction with them near the Italian frontier.

Let us, however, admit that Constantine started from Autun, and give a summary of the generally credited tradition. The emperor had arrived at a certain spot identical, so we are told, with the hamlet of Labare in the parish of Sainte-Croix (department of Saône-et-Loire).[1] Eusebius does not describe the place, but he depicts the emperor on horseback moodily brooding over Maxentius's spells. The usages of the time were cruel in the extreme. Constantius and he himself had not scrupled to throw to the beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves those of the barbarian kings whom they had succeeded in capturing; *Væ victis*, woe to the vanquished; the most magnanimous of conquerors rarely gave his prisoner anything more than the choice of the death by which he should die. Either Maxentius or he himself was doomed. At such times even the most

[1] Léon Robin, *Croix lumineuse et sacré Cœur.* Lons-le-Saunier: Maret, 1876.

courageous warrior tries to see into the future. Constantine ruminated on what had become of those members of the tetrarchy who had remained believers in the plurality of gods. Most of them had perished miserably. Severus had opened his veins, Maximian had hanged himself, Galerius had just died of a dreadful malady, his body even when alive falling into decomposition, and pierced in all directions by myriads of worms.[1] Of them all, his father alone, the worshipper of one only God, had expired in peace and honour in the heyday of his triumph. "He came to the conclusion," writes Eusebius,[2] "that these useless gods were an imposture, and he began to call upon the God of Constantius, praying Him to lend a helping hand."

Thereupon a sign was seen in heaven. Noon had passed, and the sun was slowly nearing the horizon, when above the orb of day there appeared a fiery cross, before the brilliancy of which every other light paled, and on which was inscribed the Greek words τούτῳ νίκα: In this sign thou shalt conquer. The soldiers too witnessed the cross, and were astounded.[3]

The next night Christ revealed Himself to the emperor during his slumber. He brought with Him the sign which had been seen in heaven, and enjoined on Constantine that he should have made a standard of the same shape, which might serve as a rallying-point in battle, and would be a pledge of certain victory.

Constantine sent for jewellers, described to them what he had seen, and ordered them to reproduce it in the shape of a trophy, which should be adorned

[1] Lact. *de morte pers.* xxxiii.
[2] Eus. *de vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 942.
[3] *Ib.* i. 28; *P.G.* xx. 944.

with gold and precious stones.[1] This trophy received the name of the *Labarum*, a word which appears for the first time seventy years later in Sozomen,[2] and which M. Duruy derives from the Chaldean word Labar, meaning eternity.[3]

Eusebius describes at length the *Labarum*. It comprised a very high staff (*hasta*), the top of which was crossed by a bar (*antennum*); this, of course, resulted in a T-shaped cross. Above the junction of the cross-bar, in the place where the eagle should have been, was a crown encrusted with gold and rare pebbles, in the centre of which might be read the first two letters of Christ's name X.P.—in other words, the monogram. From the cross-bar hung a kind of square-shaped banner of purple stuff. Precious stones, set off by the golden embroidery of the fabric, sparkled in the sunlight. In the upper quarters of the banner were portraits (*variis coloribus depicti*) of the emperor and his children.

The expressions used by Eusebius would lead us to suppose that there was never more than one *Labarum*. At the time of the historian Socrates the sacred banner was preserved in the imperial Buccoleon palace at Constantinople.[4] Nicholas Sœmundarson too saw it there in 1157.[5] Nicephorus Callistus, in the fourteenth century, is the last to record its presence.[6] It must have disappeared when Mohamed II. gained possession of the capital of the eastern empire.

With regard to the locality where the miracle

[1] Eus. *Vita Const.* i. 30; *P.G.* xx. 944.
[2] Sozomen, *H.E.* i. 4; *P.G.* lxvii. 867.
[3] *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. p. 42.
[4] Socrates, *H.E.* i. 2; *P.G.* lxvii. 38.
[5] Riant, *Exuviæ sacræ Constant.* vol. ii. p. 215.
[6] Nic. Cal. *H.E.* vii. 29; *P.G.* cxlv. 1274.

occurred, its identification with the hamlet of Labare, defended by Robin,[1] and still more by M. Desroches,[2] but opposed by M. Ravel Chapuis,[3] has given rise to a heated controversy.[4] At somewhat less than a mile from the village of Sainte-Croix (Saône-et-Loire) is to be found a little collection of dwellings, near which stands a modern stone cross, erected on the spot where a more ancient one had stood: this is the village of La Barre or Labare. The proximity of the two places, and the fact of their names being so suggestive, induced Robin and Desroches to infer that the parish owes its name to the apparition, whilst that of the hamlet is due to the sacred standard or *Labarum*.

But there are many reasons against such an argument. Formerly the neighbourhood of La Barre was largely covered with ponds, of which the traces still remain. As one of the archæologists who took part in the discussion remarks, it is natural to believe that at the spot where the hamlet of La Barre now stands there was once a dam or barrage, from which the hamlet derived its name.[5] The same writer also points out that in 853 "there existed quite close to the walls of Autun a basilica which, even then, was considered ancient,[6] and which was dedicated to the Holy Cross. Not far from it is now found a hamlet called La Barre, and remains of Roman roads are not

[1] *Op. cit.*

[2] J. Desroches, *Le Labarum.* Paris: Champion, 1894.

[3] In a pamphlet, *Un point d'histoire locale. Dissertation sur le Labarum.* Fragny-près-Autun, 1899.

[4] See J. B. Martin in *l'Université catholique de Lyon,* 15th July 1894 (vol. ii.); *Etudes,* 31st May 1895, pp. 354, 355; *Revue du clergé français,* 1st December 1897.

[5] Ravel Chapuis, p. 33.

[6] Olim fundata.

wanting all around."[1] What reason is there then for preferring Sainte-Croix to Autun? M. Ravel Chapuis's philological argument also has a value of its own. *Labarum* cannot have produced *Labare*, because in the former name, the accent being on the antepenultimate syllable "la," this syllable should have remained, but the other two should have been contracted. . . . For instance, the Latin word *durabilis* in French becomes *durable*, not "durabile"; likewise *pertica* resulted in *perche*, not in "pertiche," etc.[2]

For our own part we may add that the *Labarum* can scarcely have given its name to the hamlet, because the very name *Labarum* was unknown even to Eusebius, the only contemporary who mentions the miracle, and is not found before Sozomen, in the fifth century.

Moreover, for the argument in favour of La Barre in the parish of Sainte-Croix to be at all conclusive, the name should be found in use only here; but, as a matter of fact, France simply swarms with localities of which the name has been derived from the Low Latin word *Barræ* or *Barrum*, meaning a mound. *Barræ* has given rise to La Barre (Var, Tarn, etc.), Les Barres (Loiret), Les Barret (Gard), La Barrète (Somme). *Barrum* produced Bar-sur-Aube, Bar-sur-Saône, Bar-le-Duc. In the French Postal Directory we find that there are post-offices at Barre-de-Mont (Vendée), Barre-des-Cévennes (Lozère), Barret-le-Bas (Hautes Alpes), Barre-en-Ouch (Eure), Les Barres (Vienne). The situation and the lie of the ground of the hamlet of Sainte-Croix are quite sufficient to explain its name without having recourse to fanciful hypotheses.[3]

[1] Ravel Chapuis, p. 34. [2] *Ib.* p. 33.

[3] Hippolyte Cocheris, *Origine et formation des noms de lieux*, Paris: Delagrave, 1885, p. 118.

Nor does Sainte-Croix even lie on the probable route followed by Constantine's army. Setting out from Treves, with the Segusio Pass, near Mont Cenis, as his objective, he must have taken the shortest road—*i.e.* through Besançon (where St. Helena is said to have rested), and the valleys of the Doubs and the Saône, passing Châlons (*castrum Cabilonense*), Mâcon (*Matascense oppidum*, *Matisco*), Lyons (*Lugdunum*), Vienne, and so across the *Alpes Cottiæ*. He would not have been likely to go out of his way by deviating to the right in the direction of Autun, or to the left in that of Sainte-Croix.

Eusebius's Church History gives us to understand that immediately after his vision Constantine took by storm, one after the other, the fortresses of Segusio or Susa, Turin, Vercelli, Brescia, Verona, and Milan. It was, therefore, after having left Vienne, and somewhere in the vicinity of the Alps, that the event took place which proved the turning-point of history. . . . But a question remains: Did the event ever really occur?

The vision of the fiery cross is not an article of faith, consequently I may be allowed to make use of the freedom which the Church leaves us in such matters, and expose, I trust with all the respect due to a hoary tradition, the reasons for which I am inclined to consider it apocryphal. Firstly, it is difficult to understand how a general, who had just arrived at one of the most forsaken spots in Gaul, could procure jewellers to design and execute in a single night a work of art of which both the embroidery and the jewellery would have required long and patient toil. We should understand the matter better if Helena had had the trophy made at Treves, and if Constantine had taken it with him in his

luggage, and then, at the psychological moment, presented it as a sacred sign to his troops.

Again in 312 the emperor had only one child, Crispus. Fausta bore no children until 317. If, then, her children's portraits were painted on the *vexillum*, the *vexillum* described by Eusebius must have been a new trophy, or at any rate, as Gretser admits,[1] it must have been subjected to certain alterations.

Yet again the only early testimonies to the miracle are those of Eusebius and of the Acts of the martyr Artemius. How can we explain the absence of any reference to it among the many panegyrics spoken before the emperor and printed in Volume viii. of Migne's Latin Patrology? The other chroniclers, Socrates,[2] Zonaras,[3] Philostorgius,[4] Cedrenus,[5] and Nicephorus Callistus[6] do no more than reproduce Eusebius's account with faulty additions of their own. According to M. de Broglie, who sums up their testimonies,[7] they do not even agree as to the place where the miracle occurred. Philostorgius states "that at the height of the battle against Maxentius the sign of the cross was seen stretching far in the direction of the east, and formed by a wondrous light, with stars ranged round about it in the shape of a rainbow, and tracing certain characters." As regards the various apocryphal writers whom we shall quote when studying the legends of the Finding of the

[1] Jacobus Gretser, *De cruce Christi* (*Ingoldstadt*, 1600), vol. i. lib. ii. c. 37-39; Toupin, *Hist. de S. Hélène*, p. 58, note 1.

[2] *H.E.* i. 2; *P.G.* lxvii. 38.

[3] *Annal.* xiii. 1; *P.G.* cxxxiv. 1097.

[4] *H.E.* i. 6 (epitome in *P.G.* lxv. 463).

[5] *Hist. Comp.*; *P.G.* cxxi. 518.

[6] viii. 3; *P.G.* cxlvi. 16.

[7] *Constantin*, vol. i. pp. 458-459.

Cross, they locate the miracle in even more unexpected places.

The martyr Artemius, who had fought with Constantine, in the well-known oration which preceded his martyrdom, thus replies to Julian the Apostate[1]: "Thou dost object that Constantine allowed himself to be drawn over to Christianity by a ridiculous piece of superstition. Now I was in the ranks of his army at the time of his expedition against Maxentius. I saw with my own eyes a cross, more dazzling even than the sun, appear in mid-air about the middle of the day. I, and likewise the whole army, saw the Greek inscription in letters of fire which foretold our victory (*τούτῳ νίκα, hoc vince*). . . . If thou believest me not there remain plenty other eye-witnesses; ask them."

Is this document authentic? The best Catholic writers are of opinion that it is not. M. de Broglie, whose orthodoxy and learning are certainly above suspicion, writes[2]: "We shall not dwell on the oration of the Duke Artemius to Julian, which was copied by Baronius from Surius. The acts of Surius are of a far too untrustworthy character."

Man's eyes cannot bear to gaze at the sun; how then can we explain that the soldiers without a new and unwarrantable miracle—since it would have to be repeated in some 90,000 instances—were able, without being blinded, to read a text of which the characters were "more dazzling than the sun"?

It is true that Eusebius, who saw nothing, adds: "Had a stranger recounted this wonder the hearer would have been allowed to question his veracity; but it was our own invincible emperor who told us

[1] *Acta SS.* 20th October. *Vita S. Artemii*, 45.
[2] *Constantin*, vol. i. p. 458.

of it, who told us who are now writing this history long after, at a time when we had the favour of his acquaintance and friendship, and who also confirmed the exactness of his narrative by a solemn oath. Who then can dare to doubt?"[1]

But the worthy Bishop of Cæsarea has told so many tales of Constantine that even the most credulous historian is bound to discount much of what he says. Was Eusebius not found to state that, after the battle of the Milvian Bridge, God, not content with inspiring Constantine by dreams, actually manifested Himself to him in bodily form, and instructed him as to his future conduct?[2] As the result was a series of summary executions, this strange piece of flattery on the part of Eusebius scarcely falls short of blasphemy. If Constantine really told him such tales as these, then it must have been through a wish of spreading, on his own behalf, fables similar to those concerning Numa Pompilius and the nymph Egeria.

Exaggeration was the prevailing spirit of the time. Pagans and Christians vied with each other in inventing new wonders. The sovereign, doubtless, smiled at all this well-meant flattery. He had not a word of reproach to say when a pagan orator in his presence declared that Constantius Chlorus had risen from the grave, and hovering in the sky, had led the troops to conquest.[3] After a time Constantine grew weary of being compared to the poor heroes of the Iliad and of the Æneid; he wished to be made equal to the prophets of Israel.

[1] Eus. *de Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 943.

[2] Eus. *de Vita Const.*; *P.G.* xx. 963.

[3] Ducebat hos (credo) Constantius pater, qui terrarum triumphis altiori tibi cesserat. Nazarius, *Pan. Const.* 14 (*P.L.* viii. col. 593).

The legend given by Eusebius is all the more suspicious because it disagrees with other contemporary records. Lactantius, the tutor of Crispus, and a familiar figure at the court, but a man who throughout preserved a moderation and dignity of which the Bishop of Cæsarea was quite incapable, has nothing to say of the appearance of a cross in the skies. His silence gives the death-blow to the miracle of La Barre, for it must be recollected that he too believed in a divine intervention, but with this difference that it occurred in the night before the battle, and amidst other circumstances, of which we shall speak immediately.

Some good people, as we have already hinted, believe that the object of the miracle was to teach the Christians the real form of the Cross, which had been forgotten. Public opinion, we are told, wavered between the four-branched cross—the true one—and the T-shaped, three-branched cross. The latter was well known in Rome, where it stood as a threat in the dormitories of the slaves. When the page-boy at the Palatine amused himself by scratching on the wall a caricature of Christ, the cross he chose to figure was the T-shaped *crux patibulata*. Now this is all very well, but the argument is based on a mistake. Surely God Himself did not share in the common error! Yet the *Labarum* which was made to the image of the supposed vision was simply the old T-shaped cross, and not the cross of Golgotha.

Eusebius depicts Constantine seated in the midst of his jewellers and describing to them the mysterious sign which is supposed to have been shown from heaven. But, alas! history gives the lie to the picture. The old standard of the legions[1] was in the shape of

[1] Guhl & Koner, *La vie antique*. Trawinski's trans. p. 470.

a T, and was crowned by the eagle, and on the cross-beam there hung a square purple bannerette. When they saw it pass, Tertullian and Minutius Felix were able to exclaim: "Your trophies are the image of the Cross. All unknowingly you adore the Cross which you persecute." Now the frame of the *Labarum* differed in nothing from the older standard, saving in its larger size. There was therefore no need for Constantine to take the trouble of explaining to his artisans something which everyone already knew.

The eagles, the *signum* of the trophy, were considered as the watch-gods of the legions.[1] In the camps they were shut up in an improvised sanctuary, which thus became a sort of sacred temple and refuge.[2] Constantine was indeed instrumental in supplanting these eagles by the monogram of Christ, but did his vision furnish the prototype of the monogram? No, for as we have already seen[3] the monogram is found on a tombstone of A.D. 268. Diocletian's martyrs may have worn it round their necks when being driven to the Coliseum.

Hence the vision resulted in not one single real innovation; or, to sum up, the *Labarum* consists merely of a juxtaposition of elements, which were already public property. If its preparing required care and patient work, then we are justified in considering that it was put together at Treves in the quiet which preceded the war, and that it was made, not by the yet pagan Constantine, but by his mother. Was it Fausta who prevented this standard being displayed at the departure from Treves, and did her evil influence grow less and less as Constantine neared

[1] Numina legionis (Herod. iv. 4).

[2] Tacitus, *Annals*, i. 39.

[3] See above, p. 88.

Italy? And did a day come at last when, moved by grace and the counsels of his mother, Constantine finally resolved to unfurl the ensign and set it in front of his army? I believe this is really what occurred; but, of course, at this distance of time, and in the absence of testimonies, it does not admit of proof. Christian France was to be born of an act of faith made by Clovis in the God of Clotilda on the battle-field of Tolbiac. Is it not antecedently probable that the Christian empire of Rome was born of an act of faith made by Constantine, in the supreme moment before the opening of the campaign, in the God of his mother Helena? If so, then God's intervention, though less dramatic, would not be less wonderful, for the most touching of all miracles are those which hide themselves under the form of grace.

Τούτῳ νίκα, these are the words which, we are told, were seen in the skies. Is it not somewhat strange that Providence should thus have addressed in Greek the Latin legionaries and the Britons, Gauls, and Franks who formed their auxiliaries? Greek was the daily language of Helena and Constantine, and my impression is that the words were spoken not by the skies, but by the angel, still clad in mortal flesh, who was soon to be the means of unearthing the Cross of Christ.

Whichever opinion we prefer, there is no doubt that Constantine's army entered Italy marching behind a standard capped with Christ's initials in place of the olden eagle.

Constantine had staked his all on our Saviour's side, nor can there be any doubt that this change in his mind was in no sense determined by worldly motives. Persecution had drummed all Christians out of the army. The majority of the Roman population

was pagan, and remained pagan until the barbarian invasions. The countrysides remained so staunch to the gods of their fathers that even Charlemagne will be hard put to convert them.[1] M. Beugnot estimates that at the time Christians formed only a twentieth part of the population of the empire.[2] Hence Constantine in siding with them was disregarding the rules of human prudence,[3] compromising his popularity and putting himself in opposition with the majority. But Helena's God was merciful, and made him victorious both over men and human logic.

After a succession of battles the little army arrived at the gates of Rome. So far the monogram had proved luckier than all Maxentius's spells. But there remained now the most difficult part of the business, a task which the trained legions of Severus and Galerius had refused to undertake, and which every pagan soldier considered as nothing short of sacrilege—the assault of the Eternal City and of its sacred Capitol. But the legions were intoxicated with their recent victories, and would stop at nothing.

Constantine was approaching Rome through Etruria by the Via Flaminia, and was yet some distance from the Milvian Bridge, which spans the Tiber. To gain their ends, Maxentius's 180,000 soldiers had only to oppose the passage over the Tiber, and if beaten then retire on Rome, in which stronghold they could afford to laugh at their enemies. But in the event Maxentius was not

[1] Baluze, *Capit. reg. Franc. passim.*

[2] [This seems a low estimate, but it must be borne in mind that many of the pagans were only nominally such; probably the number of formal pagans was not very much greater than the number of formal Christians.—*Trans.*]

[3] Boissier, *La Fin du paganisme*, vol. i. pp. 27-28.

merely forced to retreat; he was utterly vanquished. Constantine, who could hardly believe his good fortune, saw with astonishment his enemy doing all that was possible to facilitate the northerners' victory. He saw him build a bridge parallel with that of Milvius, cross it with his whole army, and then by an astounding reversal of all classic strategy, give battle with his back to the river.

"Constantine," writes M. de Broglie,[1] "met the advanced posts of the enemy at a little place called *Saxa rubra*, about nine miles from Rome and six from the Milvian Bridge. . . . From the heights which here rise about the *Via Flaminia* we can see the whole plain of Latium, the theatre of those bitter conflicts which laid the foundation of Roman greatness. At the foot of an amphitheatre of mountains the great city rears its head, casting the reflections of its buildings into the yellow flood of the Tiber. Never did Providence prepare a more fitting framework for so solemn a combat. On the summits of those seven hills, loaded with temples, palaces, memories, and years, all the gods of the ancient world seemed to be looking in awe and expectation for the first appearance in the distance of the Standard of the Cross."

Constantine during that night between the 27th and 28th of October which preceded the renewal of the face of the earth was slumbering peacefully, when the God of Helena made His presence felt. He heard in his dream a voice commanding him to paint the sign of the cross on his soldiers' shields, and then to start the battle. He awoke with a start, and as soon as day broke[2] he had the mystic sign X

[1] *Op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 228-229.

[2] Lact. *de morte pers.* xliv.; *P.L.* vii. 261.

engraved on all the bucklers. Then the clarions gave the signal to attack. The bloody gods of Rome could now see the sign of the Crucified, with its diamonds blazing in the light of the rising sun, on the dark background formed by the dense mass of advancing men.

The pagan army was routed, and perished in crowds in the flooded Tiber. The Christians could only compare the disaster with that of the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea. Maxentius, now that he could no longer gratify his passions, drowned himself; his head was stuck on a lance, and carried in front of his brother-in-law to Rome. The Senate and the populace, as was usual, acclaimed the victor, and erected a triumphal arch in his honour.

Constantine had his mother brought to Rome, and out of the treasury bought her the Sessorian palace near the gardens of Heliogabalus. On the Forum, in front of the Capitol, he had his own statue erected, in which he is represented holding in his right hand a lance in the form of a cross. On the pedestal was inscribed: "By this salutary sign of true courage I delivered your city from the yoke of tyranny, and restored to the Senate and the liberated Roman people the splendour of their ancient fame."[1] The statue was overthrown by the barbarians, but it was recovered in the pontificate of Clement XI., and placed at the entrance to the Lateran basilica.[2] The next year (313) the edict of Milan proclaimed freedom of conscience in words, in comparison with which the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" seems feeble. The Beast was vanquished, and the Triumphant Cross made its entry into public life, and took possession of the buildings and basilicas.

[1] Eus. *de Vita Const.* i. 40; *P.L.* viii. 27.

[2] Toupin, *op. cit.* p. 62.

Being more of a man of the world, Constantine did not, like Clovis, immediately solicit baptism; he feared that by so doing he might curtail his freedom. So long as his mother lived his sympathies were with the Orthodox, but after her death he turned to the Arians. He never yielded up his heart to God, but strove to repay the debt he owed Him, by his munificence towards the Church; he lived to learn to what end a catechumen, who resists the call of grace, must inevitably come; he never was a great Christian, but he remained to the end a careful politician and a patron of religion.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECOVERY OF THE TRUE CROSS

Macarius, whose name in Greek[1] is the equivalent of the Latin name Fortunatus, and who, under Constantine, was bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, seems to have been the real instigator of the enterprise which resulted in the discovery of the True Cross. Among the clergy his virtues had earned him an esteem which bordered on veneration.[2] St. Athanasius reckoned him among apostolic men.[3]

He attended the opening sessions of the Nicene Council (5th or 6th July 325[4]). Jerusalem, his see, was but a city of the province of Palestine, of which the capital was Cæsarea. As the Church had adopted the civil territorial divisions, the bishop of Jerusalem was only reckoned as a suffragan of the metropolitan bishop of Cæsarea. Macarius, considering that this secondary position was a slight on the see which Christ had rendered famous by His death, requested that he should be declared independent, and possibly also laid claim to the patriarchate.

The Council could not, however, be brought to see things in this light, and answered his request by its eighth canon: "The bishop of Ælia Capitolina retains the honour which he has by ancient tradition,

[1] Μακάριος.

[2] Theodoret, *H.E.* i. 17; *P.G.* lxxxii. 960.

[3] Athan. *Ep. ad episc. Ægypti et Libyæ*; *P.G.* xxv.

[4] Duruy, *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. p. 114.

but without prejudice, to the supremacy of the metropolitan."[1]

It is generally thought that Helena followed her son to Nicæa, that Macarius spoke to them of the permanent sacrilege constituted by the temples of Jupiter and Venus established over the Holy Places, and that the sovereigns were moved by the bishop's eloquence. In effect, Constantine gave him orders to seek out, as soon as he should have returned, the spots sanctified by the Resurrection and Passion.[2] He also expressed a wish that, in memory of the peace he had given to the Church, a grand basilica should be built.[3] By so doing, he added, he would merely be fulfilling a duty which he had imposed on himself.[4] In taking leave of the bishop he gave him a pallium in cloth of gold as a testimonial of his exceptional esteem.[5] This was a sort of imperial ratification of the privilege accorded to Macarius by the Council; for the pallium, a kind of collar to which were suspended two bands, one in front and one behind, was a priestly ornament worn only by archbishops and certain privileged bishops.[6]

Constantine returned to Rome to celebrate his *vicennalia*. He arrived about the month of July 326. The populace, which had remained faithful to its ancient deities, and had been vexed by the favours which he had just bestowed on the Christians, gave him a hostile reception, and stoned his statues. Fausta

[1] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 6. The see of Jerusalem finally secured its rights at the Council of Chalcedonia.

[2] Theoph. *Chronogr.*; *P.G.* cviii. 103.

[3] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 1; *P.G.* lxvii.

[4] Eus. *de Vita Const.* iii. 25.

[5] Theodoret, *H.E.* ii. 27. This pallium was afterwards sold by Cyril, the successor of Macarius, to help the needy during a famine.

[6] Martigny, *Dict. des antiquités chrét.* (art. Pallium).

too, his second wife and his evil genius, had been playing the part of the traitress. Since the birth of her first child she had begun to be jealous of Crispus, the son of her husband's first union. He was brilliant, young, and handsome, beloved of the people, successful in the wars, and, moreover, he was heir-presumptive to the throne. She obtained the aid of several high-placed functionaries, and proceeded to cajole Constantine, who was then alone, as his mother had not yet returned. Of what crime she accused Crispus we have no means of telling. Did she pretend that he had been guilty of high treason? Or did she repeat the odious calumny of Potiphar's wife?[1] At any rate the upshot of her interview was that Crispus was, without any reason being given, arrested, and imprisoned at Paula in Istria. Soon after it transpired that he had died, either by poison or by the sword.

Strictly and legally speaking, Constantine did not thereby commit a crime. He had simply made use of the powers which were his by custom. "From the very beginning of the empire," writes M. Laboulaye, "we find princes performing the office of judges—and this without consulting the Senate—on all those who had been unfortunate enough to prove themselves displeasing. Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Adrian, had a speedy way of ridding themselves of those whom they disliked."[2] This was *a fortiori* the usage when the crime was one of *lèse majesté*. It was an institution that in such cases the plaintiff should be also the judge. If in the case of Crispus there was a question of the empress's or the emperor's honour, we

[1] Zosimus, ii. 29-30; Philost. *H.E.* ii. 4; Epitome, *P.G.* lxv. 467.

[2] *Essai sur les lois criminelles des Romains*, p. 430.

can well understand the secrecy of the proceedings, which were equivalent to a court sitting with closed doors.

No sooner had the tragedy been enacted than Helena arrived. She had been detained in the East, probably by the preparations for her approaching journey to Jerusalem. She had always idolised Crispus, and with all the authority of an outraged mother she required of her son an account of her grandchild's blood. Her words brought bitter remorse to the heart of the still pagan emperor. Matters were again gone into, and though, alas, too late, Crispus's innocence was established, and doubtless too Fausta's plot then came to light. Constantine, mad with rage and sorrow, resolved on immediate revenge, and this time with some justification. Several of his counsellors paid for their false testimony with their heads; and as for Fausta, she perished, strangled in a bath of boiling water.

These horrors seemed to have happened in the months of July and August 326.[1] The Christians were terrified, but the pagans, who affected to scorn the emperor, were filled with joy. Some unknown hand wrote on the palace-gate the sarcastic lines: "Why tell of the golden age? 'tis now the age of pearls—Nero's pearls."[2]

Constantine could now no longer venture out of doors without being subjected to glances of contempt and hatred. At every step too he found memories of his child and of his wife rising up like spirits to reproach him. He suddenly resolved to flee from Rome, and carry his government with him,

[1] De Broglie, *Constantin*, 7th ed. vol. ii. p. 113.

[2] Saturni aurea secla quis requiret
Sunt hæc gemmæ, sed Neroniana.

to Nicomedia, and there to stay till Constantinople had been built. To the Pope of Rome[1] he made over as a gift the palace of the unfortunate Fausta, on which the church of St. John in the Lateran was afterwards built. We know that on the 7th July 326 he was still in Rome, for he there promulgated a law.[2] From the Theodosian Code we gather that he was at Spoleto at the beginning of October.[3] At that time the crossing of the Mediterranean was a lengthy business; probably he did not arrive at Nicomedia before the end of 326 or the beginning of 327.

St. Helena carried her troubles to the foot of the altars. So as to avoid dwelling on Crispus, she constantly allowed her thoughts to drift to the conversations she had had with Macarius, and to her projected visit to the Holy Land; in the ardour of her faith she dreamed of overthrowing the walls of the pagan Ælia Capitolina, and restoring to the light Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre; still more, she wished to find the True Cross, which had disappeared so mysteriously and completely that no man had ever seen it or knew where it lay.[4]

The Fathers of the Church had no hesitation in declaring that this besetting thought of hers was due to inspiration.[5] Then later on came dreams; now the early Church was very prone to take seriously the dreams of aged people. The general belief was that in the night, when the body is plunged in sleep,

[1] The title of pope was at the time common to many.

[2] De infirmandis his quæ sub tyrannis aut Barbaris gesta sunt. *P.L.* viii. 315.

[3] Theodosian Code, XVI. v. 1; 1 and 2.

[4] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 1.

[5] Paulinus of Nola, *ep. ad Sev.* 31.

the soul is more ready to hear freely the voice of God. The Apostle Peter speaking to the Jews says: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and *your old men shall dream dreams.*"[1] It was in her dreams that St. Helena received orders to depart,[2] and the visions she had were so precise in their detail that she could point out the very spot where the diggers should commence.[3]

Constantine dearly loved his mother; he had associated her with himself as Augusta. He was wont to follow her counsels, and he not only willingly gave her leave to embark on her expedition, but also contributed a great sum out of the public treasury[4] towards defraying her expenses, and furnished her with a rescript empowering her to remove the esplanade at Ælia.[5]

In the meantime the Jews, taking advantage of the quiet times which had followed the fall of Maximin and Licinius, were coming back one by one to the old centre of their race. They hoped to rebuild their Temple in the shadow of the future basilica.[6] Constantine may possibly have feared an attack from them; at any rate he gave Helena an escort, which in the event turned out very useful. "The legionaries had conquered the world by the pick as much as by the sword."[7] With the help

[1] Acts ii. 17.

[2] Theoph. *Chronogr.* A.D. 317.

[3] Ad locum cœlesti sibi indicio designatum (Rufinus, *H.E.* I. vii.; *P.L.* xxi. 476).

[4] Paulinus of Nola (*ep. ad Sev.* 31).

[5] Paulinus, *ib.*

[6] Dom Marie Bernard, *L'Église devant les Barbares,* vol. i. p 40.

[7] Duruy.

of their picks they were now about to crown their conquest of the world by finding the relics of Christ.

We have no means of deciding whether Helena's starting-point for her pilgrimage was Rome or Nicomedia, or whether she travelled alone, or in the company of her son when he transferred his capital to the East. But it seems more probable that, in order to take on board her escort, to obtain the papers authorising her to take possession of the land she required, and also the vast sums of money necessary for the work, she must have first paid a visit to Nicomedia. Hence the date of her voyage to the East was not much later, if at all, than the voyage of Constantine alluded to above.

De Vogüé, Guérin, Toupin,[1] Rohault de Fleury, and Couret[2] believe that she reached Jerusalem in December 326. De Broglie and Duruy contend that this happened in January 327. In spite of her great age—she was then in her eightieth year—the empress performed the journey without difficulty,[3] escorted by the soldiers, and followed by waggons loaded with coined silver.[4]

As soon as Macarius heard of her arrival he convoked all the bishops of the province,[5] and went to meet her, receiving her with all due honours;[6] in fact, with a pomp entirely without precedent, especially then, when the era of the martyrs had only just finished. The preparations made by the officials were nothing in comparison with the imposing procession

[1] *Hist. de S. Hélène,* Tours: Cattier, p. 325.
[2] *Les légendes du S. Sépulcre,* Paris, 1894, p. 2.
[3] Paulinus, *ad Sev.* 31.
[4] Theoph. *Chron.* an. 317; *P.G.* cviii. 109.
[5] Georgius Harmatolus, *Chron.*; *P.G.* cx. 620.
[6] Theophanes, *ib.*

of ecclesiastics and virgins which Macarius had marshalled to meet the empress mother.

M. Couret[1] has given a striking description of the meeting: "Wherefore all this stir in Jerusalem, why this commotion under the sombre vaults of the bazaar, why do some look sad, and why do the Christians—Greeks and Syrians—all wear a look of joy; what is there to frighten the little colony of Jews established outside the walls in the dirty Galilean quarter? What cause brings out the Roman tribune, at the head of his horsemen and of the Palestine garrison, and the *curator reipublicæ* preceded by his ushers, and wherefore do they all hasten towards the Damascus Gate?[2] And why does the bishop Macarius, wearing the pallium which Constantine had given him, and followed by his clergy and the bishops of the province, direct his steps by a different road towards the same point?

"Hear you not, in the direction of the same Damascus Gate, where the Roman road with its slippery stones descends through the midst of the broken vale which divides Scopus from the Mount of Olives, hear you not the clear and joyful note of the silver trumpets sounding forth their arrival? Already through the clouds of dust we can catch a glimpse of the gilt and silver breastplates of the imperial guards escorting an ivory litter hung round with purple curtains. Before this litter even the tribune lets fall the point of his sword, and bends his knee, whilst, on the other side, the golden cross is lowered, the thuribles belch forth their fragrant fumes, the choir-boys scatter handfuls of flowers, and the bishops

[1] *Les légendes du S. Sépulcre*, pp. 3-5.

[2] What is now the Damascus Gate appears of old to have been styled the Nablus or Neapolitan Gate.

with their deep musical voices intone the Alleluia of the days of gladness.

"At last the procession comes to a standstill, the eunuchs draw back the purple curtains and open the door, and a woman steps out; she is aged, pale, dressed in mourning, and her face, which once had been beautiful, shows traces of great sorrow. She kneels before the bishop of Jerusalem and begs his blessing. This is the Augusta."

After exchanging a few words, in spite of her great fatigue she begged Macarius to lead her to the terrace above the Holy Places. Then the procession resumed its way, entered the city, and proceeded along the long, cold, classical colonnade of the pagan city built by Adrian; soon they reached the platform. "There," writes M. Couret, "stood a sacred grove stocked with dark-hued trees, with its tall cypresses and umbrella-shaped cedars, with pointed firs, and fragrant acacias covering with their accursed shade the two pagan chapels dedicated to Jupiter and Venus."[1]

Helena alighted from her litter at the sight[2] of the goddess of love displaying her naked charms to the eyes of all. Her only thought was of the sacred treasures buried far beneath. Instinctively she felt that she was called to play a high part, and, as if inspired, she spoke the words of which Ambrose has preserved the memory[3]: "Here indeed is the battlefield, but where are the trophies of victory? I seek the Standard of Salvation, and I find it not. Shall I then reign whilst the Saviour's Cross lies in the dust? Shall I be glorious whilst the sign of Christ's victory

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 6.
[2] Paulinus, *ep. ad Sev.* 31.
[3] *De obitu Theod.*; *P.L.* xvi. 1400.

is buried in the earth? . . . Demon, wherefore didst thou hide this wood, save to be vanquished once again? Yea, thou shalt be made to bite the dust, and to-day a woman will bring thy tricks to naught. As Mary bore the Lord, so I shall discover His Cross. She manifested her child by giving him to the world; I, for my part, shall teach His resurrection."

According to tradition Helena forsook the sumptuous apartments prepared for her, and went to shut herself in a convent of nuns, in a bare-walled cell, whose only furniture was a wooden pallet, doubtless somewhere on the Sion hill, for there it was that monasteries were first established.[1] Now that she had at last reached Ælia, whose foundation was laid on Holy Jerusalem, she and the bishop proceeded to make themselves ready for their mission by retirement, by fasting, and by ardent prayer,[2] for it must not be forgotten that Helena and Macarius had pledged themselves to perform a work in which they could expect no human aid. Calvary and the sepulchre were indeed not difficult to find, for their position was known by all, but where was the Cross?

Some secret presentiment led Macarius to seek for it near the spot covered by the temple of Venus; moreover, he felt that, in spite of all the precautions taken by Annas and Caiphas, the Jews who had helped to bury the crosses could not have failed to leave behind them some record of their act. Hence when he called a council he invited to it not only all those Christians who were esteemed for their learning and sanctity, but also a few well-known Jews. The Hebrews being by nature wily, gladly accepted his

[1] Eucherius, *Epit. de locis aliquibus sanctis*, ii.; Tobler, *Itinera*, 52.

[2] Theoph. *Chron.* an. 317; *P.G.* cviii. 109.

invitation, and they brought with them a rabbi hailing from the far East, who had among his family papers the very information which was sought.[1] According to Gregory of Tours his name was Jude or Judas, and he afterwards became a convert, receiving at his baptism the name of Quiriacus.[2] This same Cyriacus or Quiriacus soon became the hero of a marvellous legend, of which more anon. The faithful also did their best to ensure God's help, by which man's work might be supplemented; they sought for signs from heaven and scanned their dreams for revelations.

Then the real work was started, the inhabitants of the city lending a helping hand to the legionaries.[3] Meanwhile the empress stayed near the works, usually sitting on a marble chair, which was for long afterwards shown at Jerusalem.[4] Other pilgrims, however, consider this chair as that of St. James.[5] Occasionally the workmen grew weary, and complained of the fruitlessness of their efforts, but as soon as they saw the empress throwing herself on her knees in the dust they would resume their labour with new zest.[6]

Day and night the work went on. The removal of a mass of masonry 20 feet deep by 300 feet long is not the work of a single day. Instead of starting from the east, where the grotto of Joseph of

[1] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 1.

[2] Greg. Turon. *H.E. Francorum,* i. 34; *P.L.* lxxi. 179.

[3] Paulinus, *ep. ad Sev.* 31.

[4] Couret, *op. cit.* p. 128, quotes as his references for this statement the *Evagatorium,* Fratris Felicis Fabri, i. 295, and Castela, *le sainct Voyage de Hiérusalem et mont Sinay faict en l'an* 1600. Bourdeaux, MDCIII. 233.

[5] Ludulphus Sudheim, *De itinere Terre Sancte,* in the *Archives de l'Orient Latin* (ii. No. iii. *Voyages,* 353). Paris: Leroux, 1884. [A chair of this description is still shown in the Armenian Church of St. James at Jerusalem.—*Trans.*]

[6] Paulinus, *ib.*

Arimathæa lay hid, the workmen, following either the instructions of Judas or the revelations of Helena and Macarius, sought at the western end of the platform for the opening of the cistern, which finally they found.[1]

Only a few men could now work at once, but without intermission they laboured at the task of extracting the rubbish and the stones which filled the narrow neck. Lower and lower went the diggers, with no result. At a depth of some twenty feet the tunnel widened out.[2] The workmen now found themselves in a spacious cave; but was this all? Was this then the bottom, and had all hope been lost? Would the dreams of Helena and Macarius and the documents of Judas all prove false? By sounding the walls of the cave a passage was at last found leading even lower, and work began anew. According to tradition[3] the empress now took up her abode in the first cave, and there continued to pray amidst the rubbish. In remembrance of this the chapel now bears her name. At last the picks struck on wood, and soon three crosses were brought to light, and also a tablet bearing on it the inscription recorded in the Gospels.

From this point onward we are confronted by a double tradition. According to St. Ambrose the true cross was distinguished from the crosses of the thieves by its title. Helena sat herself down before the three crosses, and opened the Gospels. One of the crosses bore a script nailed to it, on which was written: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The chief priests had said to Pilate: "Write not 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said 'I am the King of the Jews,'

[1] Paulinus, *ep. ad Sev.*

[2] Into what is now called St. Helena's Chapel.

[3] See above, p. 46.

and Pilate answering had said, 'What I have written, I have written.'" St. Ambrose considers Pilate's reply as a real inspiration, for it means: "I have written not what pleases you, but what future ages will wish to know. I wrote, not for you, but for posterity; as if he had written this expressly that Helena might read and recognise the cross of her Saviour."[1] We must remember that Theodosius had taken Ambrose into his confidence, and that no one was better placed for ascertaining the truth.[2]

St. John Chrysostom gives a similar version: "It was to come to pass that the True Cross should be sought for, that the three crosses should be confused, and that the Cross of Christ should be recognised first by its being in the centre, and secondly by its bearing a title."[3]

If it were true, as some others of the Fathers relate, that Christ alone was nailed to His cross, whereas the thieves were only tied to theirs, then the choice would have been easier. The True Cross would then have been recognised by the holes made in it by the nails.

The Bollandists and the majority of early chroniclers hold that the Cross was identified by means of a miracle. According to Sozomen it was at first impossible to tell which of the three crosses was the true; the title was indeed in the cavern with the crosses, but it had been detached. Now at that time a certain high-placed lady of Ælia was lying at death's door.[4] She was a widow, Libania

[1] Ambros. *De obitu Theod.*; *P.L.* xvi. 1399 and 1402.

[2] Ambrose's opinion is accepted as probable by Mgr. Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, vol. ii. p. 270.

[3] Hom. 85 (alias 84), *in Joan*, i.; *P.G.* lix. 461.

[4] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 7.

by name, who had been born a Jewess, but who after the death of her husband Isachar had forsaken the Synagogue.[1] Macarius on seeing the general anxiety exclaimed: "Bring away all the crosses, and let God show that of the Saviour." Followed by Helena and the crowd, he proceeded to the house of the dying lady, fell on his knees, and prayed as follows:—"O Lord, who by the Passion of Thine only Son on the cross, didst deign to restore salvation to mankind, and who even now hast inspired thy handmaid Helena to seek for the blessed wood to which the author of our salvation was nailed, show clearly which it was, among the three crosses, that was raised for Thy glory. Distinguish it from those which only served for a common execution. Let this woman who is now expiring return from death's door as soon as she is touched by the wood of salvation." [2]

She was touched with one and then with another cross, but to no avail, but as soon as the third was presented she opened her eyes, and arose, and feeling herself even more alive and vigorous than when she had been in health, she began to run about the house glorifying God's almighty power.[3]

We now return to the cave. Helena, the true cross being now revealed, fell on her knees, but felt drawn between two—hesitating between her desire to kiss the holy relic and her fear of committing a sacrilege in touching it with her lips. At last she

[1] *Acta SS.* 18th August. *Vita S. Helenæ*, auctore Almanno Altivillarensi, §. 27. Molinier and Kohler, *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, 47. Geneva: Fick, 1885.

[2] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 8; *P.L.* xxi. 476.

[3] Rufinus, *ib.* This account agrees with those of Theodoret, Sozomen, and Theophanes. Almannus, on the other hand, has it that Libania's cure was effected not at her house, but in the Holy Places, to which she had been carried.

embraced it, and the sweetness of grace entered the innermost parts of her soul.[1]

Soon the news spread, and then the multitude came flocking together with joy and impatience. Held back, no doubt by the legionaries, they loudly clamoured to be allowed to see and worship. Macarius yielded, and as soon as the holy Cross appeared in sight it was acclaimed with shouts of joy, whilst every throat vociferated the ancient Greek chant *Kyrie eleison.*[2] When night fell Macarius and Helena had the Cross carried in triumph by torchlight and with much chanting of hymns to the oratory of the *Cœnaculum.*[3]

Most saints' lives either add to, or substitute for the miracle we have spoken of, the raising of a dead man to life. Macarius had the crosses brought to an open space. About the hour of noon there came by the funeral procession of a young man who had died the day before. The bishop resolved to put the crosses to the proof, and the crowd fell back in amazement on beholding the corpse returning to life and rising to its feet. This event, in this form, is recorded by no Greek writer, nor by the *Acta Sanctorum.* I consider it apocryphal. The legend probably arose in the western portion of the empire, and with the help of a little fancy the cure became a resurrection. Paulinus of Nola is the earliest writer to testify to a transformation of the miracle.[4] Sulpicius Severus takes the account as given him by his friend[5].

[1] Ambrose, *De ob. Theod*; *P.L.* xvi. 1401.

[2] *Menol. Græc.*; *P.G.* cxvii. 47.

[3] Toupin (*Hist. de S. Hélène*, p. 146) gives as his reference for this detail *Oratio incerti in exaltatione venerandæ et vivificæ Crucis.* Gretser, *de Cruce Christi*, v. ii. p. 185.

[4] Paulinus, *ep. ad Sev.* 31; *P.L.* lxi. 325 *ff.*

[5] Sulpicius, *Hist. Sacra*, ii. 34; *P.L.* xx. 148.

From the West the fame of the new miracle made its way to the East, where we find Sozomen, evidently somewhat taken aback by the change, writing: "*It is said* that in like manner even a dead man was raised."

Rufinus, Theodoretus, and Sozomen speak of the nails without, however, informing us when and where they had been found. St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks of a rumour to the effect that they were found in the wood itself, into which the executioners had again nailed them.[1] Socrates distinctly says that they were found in the Holy Sepulchre; however, as he also states that the crosses were found there, his text proves nothing. Theophanes is ambiguous, he writes: "The Holy Sepulchre and Calvary were found, and near them, towards the east, three crosses. A still more attentive search resulted in the nails also being discovered." Gregory of Tours speaks for a different tradition, according to which they were found by Helena, but after the finding of the Cross.[2] M. Rohault de Fleury[3] suggests that the empress may possibly have bought them. The general impression we obtain from all this is that the nails, like the crosses, had been buried, and that they came to light about the same time. The nails were not with the crosses—*i.e.* in the cavern; we may suppose that after the crucifixion they fell into the hands of the disciples, and were deposited in the second century in the Holy Sepulchre, which, like the *Cœnaculum*, had become a place of prayer. Adrian's reason for erecting the temple esplanade above the sepulchre had been precisely to prevent the Christians from visiting

[1] Cyril, *Comment. in Zach. proph.*; *P.G.* lxxii. 271.

[2] Greg. Tur. *de gloria martyrum*, i. 6; *P.L.* lxxi. 710.

[3] *Mém.* 169.

the tomb. Probably in order to avoid the danger of a sedition the Romans had hurried the building of this platform ; this would account for the Christians, taken by surprise, not having had time to withdraw these relics, which were thus buried under the foundations of Ælia. Of course, we merely throw this out as a suggestion.

The finding of the Cross was signalised by great festivities. Helena invited to a banquet all the consecrated virgins of the city. She made herself the servant of the servants of God, and with her imperial hands she served them at table and poured out their drink.[1] The unfortunate especially found reasons for rejoicing, for great alms were distributed, and many condemned prisoners were released from their bonds.[2]

As to the date of the finding, we are told that it occurred on the 13th September 327, the anniversary day of the consecration of Solomon's Temple.[3] That being the case, we can only wonder why the Church keeps the feast on the 8th of May.

One question yet remains to be answered. We have seen that chroniclers disagree, some preferring the human and others the miraculous proof. Must we not, then, choose between the two? The Abbé Gosselin rightly observes: "It is true that the writers who recount in detail the story of the finding of the Cross are not in agreement as to certain circumstances amidst which it occurred. Some say that Christ's Cross was recognised by its title, others by

[1] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 8.

[2] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 2.

[3] *Peregrinatio Silviæ*, p. 108; Theodosius, *De Terra Sancta*, v. (Tobler, 64); *Menolog. Græc.*; Tixeront, *Origines de l'Église d'Ephèse*, p. 175; *Acta SS.* May, vol. i. 365.

the cure of a sick woman. . . . Nothing is more common than to find even the most trustworthy historians giving different accounts of the circumstances which accompany the same fact."[1] Without there being any real contradiction in the testimonies, each one takes the fact which strikes him most, and neglects the rest. Truth will possibly be found in a combination of whatever has the appearance of being true in the different series of accounts. Helena's inspiration and dreams did not prevent Macarius from assembling in council the notabilities of Ælia, nor from accepting the information which Judas was ready to impart. So likewise the fact of the title being still fixed to the Cross does not exclude the possibility of a miracle having occurred.

It may be that Rufinus gives us the key to the problem when he writes: "The title, written by Pilate in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew letters, was there, but it did not show *clearly enough* which was the Saviour's gibbet."[2] From this it would seem that the title did to some extent point to one of the crosses rather than to the others. Helena and Macarius may well have had good antecedent reasons for believing, without having had that certainty to which no merely human proof can pretend. Rufinus is right; the reasons, such as they had, were insufficient to allow of their placing the wood on the altar and demanding that men should give it honour. Helena and Macarius prayed, and God's power, by effecting a creature's cure, came to supplement such proofs as they already possessed.

[1] Gosselin, *Notice sur la Couronne d'épines*, pp. 11-12.

[2] Sed nec ipse *satis evidenter* Dominici prodebat signa patibuli.

CHAPTER V

HELENA DIVIDES THE CROSS. HER DEATH

We left Helena with the True Cross, with the title, and the nails; what will she do with the relics she has sought and found?

It is said that, being anxious to visit Pope Silvester and do him homage, she crossed the seas, and hastened to hand over to him the larger portion of her find. But it must be pointed out that this tradition makes her follow a strange route. "At the time when Constantine lived," writes Gregory of Tours,[1] "the Adriatic Sea was so tempestuous, shipwrecks were so frequent, and so many men perished by them, that it acquired the name of the sailors' death-trap.[2] The queen, anxious to relieve so many miseries, had one of the four nails of the cross thrown into the sea, hoping that by God's mercy this would be sufficient to allay the furious motion of the waves. And, in fact, no sooner had she done so than the Adriatic grew calm, and ever since it has been blest with favourable winds. Even to-day seamen venerate the sea which was thus hallowed, and when they reach it they fast, and pray, and join in hymns."

As soon as she reached Rome, Helena, so we are told, wishing to take revenge for the sacrilege committed by Adrian in building a temple of Venus over

[1] *De gloria martyrum*, i. 6; *P.L.* lxxi. 710.

[2] [For *Adriatic* we should probably read *Ionian Sea*. The distinction between the two seas is not very marked, and navigators even to-day often speak of the Ionian Sea as the Adriatic.—*Trans.*]

Calvary, pulled down an ancient temple of Venus, and with the material thus obtained built the basilica of the Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem on the same site.[1] To the new basilica was given a large piece of the True Cross, the title, one nail, the cross-beam of the good thief's cross, and the finger which St. Thomas had placed in our Saviour's side. To Treves the empress presented Christ's seamless coat, a nail, and the knife which had been used at the Last Supper; neither did she forget the city of Besançon.

But from beginning to end this story is the merest fiction. The tale of the casting of a nail into the Adriatic to quiet the sea is so absurd that hagiographical writers endeavour to deny it. In 1617 Bosio, following Gretser, says that "the empress withdrew the holy nail from the sea after having immersed it."[2] M. Gosselin adopts this version, and adds[3]: "Helena's deep respect for so precious a relic does not allow us to think for a moment that she deprived herself and the Church of such a treasure."[4] Yet Gregory of Tours categorically states that she *cast* the nail into the sea. On the whole, it is better to reject the story altogether.

Moreover Helena, even if we allow that she returned to Rome, would not have crossed the Adriatic.[5] Ships coming from Judea made for Puteoli, some few miles from Naples,[6] or Ostia, the port of Rome. Nor, again, can her erecting the new basilica have been due to any desire to spite her ancient gods, for

[1] Baronius, *Annals*, an. 324, no. 105.

[2] Bosius, *Crux triumphans et gloriosa*, I. xv. 101-102.

[3] *Notice sur la Couronne d'épines*, 137.

[4] *Cp.* R. de Fleury, *Mém.* (170), and Besozzi in his history of the church of Santa-Croce-in-Gerusalemme.

[5] [See, however, the translator's note, p. 157.]

[6] The modern Puzzuoli. Acts xxviii. 13.

no temple of Venus ever seems to have existed on that site.[1]

Let us then return again to St. Helena at Jerusalem in 327. The empress kept for herself that portion of the wood of the Cross which had touched our Saviour's shoulders,[2] giving the rest—*i.e.* the larger portion—to the church of Jerusalem,[3] after first enclosing it in a superb reliquary.[4] The Title got broken ; Jerusalem retained, apparently, the higher portion, which seems to have been seen by pilgrims in the fourth[5] and in the sixth century.[6] The empress kept all the nails for herself, and either sent, or carried them herself, to Constantine.[7] The latter had one of these mounted so as to be able to use it as an ornament, now for his crown, now for his helmet.[8] Out of another nail he had a bit made for his war-horse,[9] and it is supposed that out of some filings from this latter nail, mixed with molten metal, he made twelve new relics of an inferior class.[10]

[1] Ph. Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne,* vol. ii. p. 247.

[2] R. de Fleury (*op. cit.* 110-111) writes: "In 1241 Baldwin gave St. Louis a large part of the Holy Cross. The Cross which had got into the possession of the Doge of Venice had been taken by Helena's command from that part of the True Cross which was behind our Lord's shoulders, and which was called the Cross of Victories, because it had been carried by the armies of Constantine and his successors."

[3] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 1 ; Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 8 ; Theodoretus, *H.E.* i. 17.

[4] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 8 ; *P.L.* xxi. 476.

[5] *Peregrinatio Silviæ,* p 96.

[6] Antoninus M., *Perambulatio locorum sanctorum,* § xx. (Tobler, 102).

[7] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 8. Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, *loc. cit.*

[8] Riant, *Exuviæ,* ii. 270.

[9] Rufinus, i. 8 ; Socrates, i. 17.

[10] A nail kept at a convent in Florence is enclosed in a reliquary, on which is inscribed : "Unus ex xii. clavis" (R. de Fleury, 171).

St. Helena did not leave Jerusalem till the next year, when satisfactory progress had been made with the basilicas of the Holy Sepulchre, of the Mount of Olives, and of Bethlehem. When she did, she proceeded forthwith to Constantine at Nicomedia, and died soon after her arrival, her last recommendation to him being to lead a Christian life.[1] Her grandchildren knelt about her death-bed, kissing the hand which she had raised to bless them.[2] It is thus that events succeed each other in Eusebius's account. Hence it is idle to talk of Helena having returned to Rome, a journey which would indeed, apart from its uselessness, have been one of great difficulty to a woman now eighty years of age.[3]

Constantine had her body taken to Byzantium, which just then he was transforming into Constantinople. The army[4] acted as escort, and the remains were finally laid to rest in the basilica of the Apostles,[5] which the emperor had just built, with vaults to receive the princes of his family.[6] He himself had his tomb prepared in the same place, that he might sleep his last sleep near one that he had so dearly loved.[7]

This mausoleum, which Eusebius calls the royal monument,[8] still contained in the thirteenth century the remains of both mother and son. It was seen in 1150 by the anonymous author of the *Reliquiæ Con-*

[1] Theoph. *Chron.*; *P.G.* cviii. 114.

[2] Eus. *de Vita Const.* iii. 46.

[3] Theoph.

[4] Eus. *de Vita Const.* iii. 47.

[5] The church of the Apostles afterwards became the Sultan-Mehemet-Fatih Mosque. Mordtmann, *Esquisse topographique de Constantinople, Revue de l'art chrétien,* 1891, 28, 467-478.

[6] Theoph. *Chron.* an. 317; *P.G.* cviii. 113.

[7] In eodem sepulcro. Sœmundarson in Riant, *Exuviæ* ii. 215.

[8] *Vita Const. ib.*

stantinopolitanæ;[1] in 1167 by Nicholas Sœmundarson, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Thingeyrar in Iceland[2]; in 1200 by Anthony, archbishop of Novgorod,[3] and in 1203 by Robert of Clari.[4]

Certain chroniclers contend that in 1211 Aycard, a regular canon of Constantinople and a Venetian by birth, obtained by a trick the saint's body, and brought it to Venice, where he hid it in his monastery.[5] The Venetians kept two feasts commemorating the translation of St. Helena's relics—one on the 21st of May and the other three days after Pentecost.[6]

French and Italian writers mostly follow a different tradition which is well expounded by the Abbé Lucot.[7] The body of St. Helena was carried not to Constantinople, but to Rome. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* "Constantine Augustus (in the reign of Pope Silvester) built a basilica in honour of the blessed martyrs, Marcellinus the priest and Peter the exorcist, in the spot called 'Two Laurels.' Adjoining it he built a mausoleum, in which, in a porphyry sarcophagus, reposes the body of his blessed mother, Helena Augusta. The monument is on the Via Labicana, three miles from Rome."[8] The altar was of massive

[1] *Exuviæ*, ii. 212. [2] *Ib.* ii. 215. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ib.* ii. 232. *Li estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Constantinoble.*

[5] Andreas Dandulus, *Chronicon Venetum* in the *Exuviæ*, ii. 262. If this account be right, St. Helena's body was transferred to the monastery of St. Helena after the taking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

[6] *Exuviæ*, ii. 294 and 302.

[7] *Sainte Hélène.* Paris: Plon, 1896; Toupin, *Hist. de S. Hélène*, Tours: Cattier, 1888, p. 238 *sq.* In his *Répertoire des sources historiques du moyen-âge*, U. Chevalier quotes *La vie et miracles de saincte Hélène mère de l'empereur Constantin dont le saint corps repose à l'église d'Hautvilliers, diocèse de Reims*, près d'Ay, Troyez, 1634, in 8vo; *ib.* 1660, in 12mo; 7th ed. Châlons, 1687, in 12mo.

[8] Anastasius, *Sanctus Silvester*, 44; *P.L.* cxxvii. 1523.

gold, and before the tomb stood twenty silver lamps, weighing each one twenty lb., and supported on stands of richly decorated porphyry.[1] But this account presents a difficulty. Why did Constantine prefer a wayside basilica some miles from the city to the church of the Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem?

To return, about A.D. 840 Teutsige, or Tergisus, a monk of the Hautvillers monastery,[2] eluding the sacristan, managed one evening to conceal himself in the sanctuary, and during the night contrived to make off with a reliquary containing the embalmed corpse of the empress.[3] Quitting Rome without arousing any suspicion, he in due time reached Hautvillers. But here his story found no credence, and Teutsige, to prove to his brethren that what he had brought, concealed under his habit, was really all that remained of the finder of the Cross, had to fast three days and undergo the trial by water (*aquæ indicio*). Lucot and Toupin believed that this was really a case of the trial by boiling water, and that the monk had to enter a cauldron bodily. Flodoardus is not clear; moreover, the trial by boiling water usually consisted in the accused having simply to withdraw a ring from the bottom of the cauldron.[4] It is possible too that the monks were satisfied with the cold-water trial, which was sometimes used when the matter in hand was not criminal. Whatever the trial precisely was, the monks do not appear to have been quite convinced, for they despatched two of their brethren to Rome to make inquiries, and re-

[1] Anastasius, *Sanctus Silvester*, 44; *P.L.* cxxvii. 1523.

[2] Altum Villare. It was founded in the seventh century by St. Nivard, archbishop of Rheims.

[3] Flodoardus, *Hist. ecclesiæ Remensis*, ii. 8; *P.L.* cxxxv. 108.

[4] [Not a very difficult or dangerous matter if the performer was careful to damp his hand and arm beforehand.—*Trans.*]

frained from expressing any opinion until these two came back bringing confirmation of the news, and in addition the body of St. Polycarp.[1]

The worship of St. Helena flourished at Hautvillers until the Revolution. In 1791 Dom Grossard hid these pretended relics at Rheims and at Epernay, and before his arrest saw that they were made over to the parish priest of Ceffonds. After many adventures, which it would take too long to recount, they came into the possession of the church of St. Leu in Paris, where in 1871 they were saved from injury by the unexpected intervention of a federate sergeant.

At some unknown date, whatever remained in Rome of the supposed body of the saint was divided among several churches. In the left transept of S. Maria-in-Ara-Cœli, under the altar dedicated to St. Helena, there is an urn which is said to contain the relics of St. Helena and of the martyrs Artemius, Abundius, and Abundantius.[2] The abbey of Der, in Champagne, formerly possessed what was said to be St. Helena's head.[3] Whence it came no one knows, but it afterwards passed to the church of Montier-en-Der, with a document of 1342 duly witnessing to the translation.[4] Lastly, writes M. Lucot,[5] "there is still shown at Rome, so M. de Rossi informs me, the remains of the round mausoleum, and in the Vatican museum may still be seen the huge sarcophagus of richly sculptured porphyry in which Con-

[1] Lucot and Toupin state that the trial by water took place by command of Charles the Bald, and was presided over by Hincmar of Rheims; but they give no references.

[2] Lucot, p. 36. [3] *Ib.* p. 37.

[4] See this document in Lucot, p. 73. There was formerly at Corbeil a finger of St. Helena's which had been presented by Robert of Clari after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. *Exuviæ*, ii. 199. [5] *Ib.* p. 34.

stantine had laid his mother. Bottari and Aringhi have described this sarcophagus in their works.[1] So far as I know, the monument shows no trace of Christianity. On the cover naked children disport themselves among garlands of leaves; on the sides are depicted scenes from military life."[2]

The reader has now before him all the details of the problem. Unfortunately, they are all contradictory. What became of the remains of that woman so humble in her birth and yet so great in her mission? Shall we seek them at Rome, or at Constantinople, or at Venice, or in Paris? Personally, we incline to favour Constantinople.

St. Helena had much property in different parts of the empire; this she divided among her heirs by a will made shortly before her death.[3] No doubt she directed Constantine, as her executor, to see that Rome, Treves, and Besançon each received some portion of the relics of the Passion. We shall treat in succession of these three cities.

[1] Bottari, *Roma Sotterranea*, iii. pl. 196; Aringhi, *Roma Subterranea*, ii. p. 22.

[2] Toupin (p. 239) gives some interesting details about this sarcophagus.

[3] Eus. *Vita Const.* iii. 46.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE PASSION

1. ROME'S PORTION

THE RELICS PRESERVED AT SANTA-CROCE-IN-GERUSALEMME

THE first of Helena's wishes which Constantine immediately set about fulfilling was the erection of the basilica of Santa-Croce-in-Gerusalemme at Rome. This was to serve as the resting-place for a piece of the True Cross. The basilica consists of an upper church and of a crypt named after St. Helena. An inscription, near the passage leading down to the crypt, gives us the tradition, which, however, stands in need of some rectification.[1]

It tells us how the basilica was built by Helena after her return from Jerusalem; the foundations were laid in earth brought, by way of the sea, from Calvary, in order that the new church might be called the New Jerusalem.[2] It was consecrated by Pope Silvester I. in the calends of April, in the thirteenth year of his pontificate—*i.e.* in 327 or 328. Whoever composed this inscription preserves a discreet silence on doubtful points; it will be observed that he has nothing to say of Helena's return to Rome, nor of

[1] The text of the inscription is given by Nicquet, *Titulus Sanctæ Crucis*, Antwerpiæ, 1670, p. 152, and by Fleury, *Mém.* p. 367.

[2] [This furnishes an explanation why this Roman church should be called the church of the "Holy-Cross-*in-Jerusalem*."—*Trans.*]

the relics which she is supposed to have given to the new sanctuary.

Anastasius, a ninth-century Vatican librarian,[1] enters more into the details, and in his *Life of Pope Silvester I.* he informs us that the monument was built by Constantine. "At this same time," he writes, "Constantine Augustus built a basilica in his mother's palace, in which he placed even the wood of the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, enclosed in a golden casket adorned with stones. He it was who gave its name to this church, called even to-day 'Jerusalem'."[2]

This writer gives a grand account of the munificent donations made by the sovereign. There was the massive golden altar weighing 250 lb.; four candlesticks (to denote the four Evangelists) in gold and silver, each weighing 30 lb., and designed to burn before the Holy Wood; fifty silver lamps of 15 lb. each; a cup of pure gold weighing 10 lb.; five chalices for use at the Mass, all of them in gold, weighing each 1 lb.; three silver cups each of 8 lb.; ten silver chalices of 2 lb. each; a golden paten of ¦10 lb.; a silver one, edged with gold and adorned with stones, of 50 lb., and silver cruets of 20 lb. Much landed property was also presented to the sanctuary to defray the costs of worship.[3]

This great treasure, which Cacioni values at 143,000 pieces of gold,[4] must have contained many articles which were merely ornamental. We cannot well fancy a priest handling a paten four stone in weight,

[1] He attended the Council of Constantinople in 869.

[2] Anastasius, *Sanctus Silvester*; *P.L.* cxxvii. 1521.

[3] Et omnia agrorum circa palatium ecclesiæ dono dedit. *Ibid.*

[4] Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, vol. ii. p. 276.

or altar-boys presenting him with cruets which would turn the scale at twenty lb.[1]

Anastasius drew his information from the pontifical archives, which were then still intact, and his information is correct. That Constantine in doing what he did was acting as his mother's executor is seen by the fact that he erected the building on property which had belonged to her near the Lateran palace, and on the spot formerly covered by the gardens of Heliogabalus.[2] Hence it is that "Jerusalem" was called Helena's basilica in the Acts of the Council held at Rome in 433 under Sixtus III.[3]

In the beginning, on account of the relic of the True Cross, this basilica ranked as one of the first among the churches of Rome. This has been proved by Gerbet.[4] "In the Middle Ages," he writes, "the Pope did not sing the Good Friday Mass in the Lateran basilica, though indeed this was his own church and stood close to his palace. On that day Mass was said there by one of the cardinals. The Pope merely entered that church to vest. He then went in procession barefooted to St. Helena's basilica, where he celebrated the mystery of the Passion before the Cross."[5] Hence after the ninth century

[1] Bonneau says of Constantine that the wealth he bestowed on the churches built by him is almost incredible — in the stead of lead or iron he used gold and silver, and paved the floor with precious stones (*La Donation de Constantin*, xx. Lisieux, 1879).

[2] Gerbet, vol. ii. pp. 273-274.

[3] Sederunt in uno conflictu in basilica Heleniana quæ dicitur Sessorianum atrium. (See the Acts of this Council.)

[4] *Op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 278-279.

[5] Discalceatus pergit [Papa] cum processione et omnes cum eo cantando psalterium usque ad sanctam crucem. (Benedictus can. S. Petri. in Marten. iii. *de Antiq. eccles. ritibus*, lib. iv. xxiii.) See also Mabillon, *Mus. Italic.* 11.

the church came to be called that of the *Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem.*

The relic still exists, and R. de Fleury describes it with his usual exactitude.[1] "I had been led to suppose that the relic of the Holy Cross kept at the basilica . . . was very large. To my surprise, I found only three bits of about the size of my finger. . . . The reliquary formerly contained four pieces; this is seen by the empty space. At some far-off period a Pope desirous of repairing the losses in the relic at St. Peter's, most of which had been given away by his predecessors, abstracted one of the pieces from the reliquary at Santa Croce. Of the three remaining, the longest, that which forms the upright of the little cross, is 160 mm. in length, and varies from 6 to 11 mm. in thickness; the next has a length of 120 and a thickness of 9 mm.; the third a length of 90 and a thickness of 9 mm. On this last one it is easy to make out the vein of the wood, which evidently belongs to the *coniferæ*; the colour is the same as that of the wood commonly used in pencils; the broad and narrow veins alternate; all three are irregular in shape, and their total volume is 35·320 c." Yet this it is which in ancient works is described as *The Cross.* When relics are in question we must allow for all kinds of exaggerations. But at any rate the very tinyness of the royal gift to the head of the Church shows how greatly the Wood of the Cross was esteemed.

(1) *The Title of the Cross*

Had the Title been left to Rome by St. Helena, it would certainly have been mentioned by Anastasius

[1] *Mém.* 80.

when he speaks of the Holy Cross; and Constantine, who was so prodigal with precious metals, would certainly have made for it a gold or silver case, the more so because by its very nature the Title was something absolutely unique, and as such merited special veneration. Who then presented it? An unknown person? This is hardly likely, for the Eastern emperors were too jealous of their treasure to part with it without good reasons.

The history of the Title from 327 to the reign of Valentinian III. is an utter blank. Hence it is the Title itself we must examine for proof of its authenticity.

In every age capital punishment has been surrounded by a certain glamour, in order that the public may be made aware of the nature of the crime punished. According to Roman custom the name and misdeeds of the criminal were inscribed on a title (*Tabula*, *Tabella*, *Titulus*, *Litterae*).[1] This title was carried before the condemned on his way to the place of execution,[2] and then hung above his head if he was crucified, or else placed near him if he perished by some other death.[3]

The title was prepared by painting white a piece of board, which in this state was termed an *album*. "This word, which in general means anything white or whitened, was especially used to signify tablets, notice-boards, and the whitewashed wall spaces on which it was customary to write in red or black letters[4] all sorts of advertisements and public notices."[5]

[1] Justus Lipsius, *De Cruce*, p. 101.

[2] Suetonius, *Caligula*, c. 32; *Eus. H.E.* V. i. 19.

[3] Suetonius, *In Domitian.* c. 10.

[4] Quintilian, *Inst. or.* xii. 3; Ovid, *Fast.* i.-ii.; Martial, xi. 5, 5; xii. 26, 5.

[5] Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. des antiquités grecques et romaines* (art. Album).

In the course of time the word *album* came to mean an official deed or document. Among the best known public records are the *Album pontificis*, a list of great events, and the *Album prætoris*, or edict annually placarded in the Forum by the prætor.

As Christ was executed according to Roman law, He too must have had His title inscribed in red or black characters on a white background. We are told that Pilate chose the text, which, however, is not given in quite the same words in the four Gospels. St. John has "Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it on the cross."[1] As, according to St. John, Pilate certainly did not attend in person the crucifixion, nor fix the inscription to the Cross, we must understand the Evangelist as meaning that both the fixing and the writing of the Title was deputed by Pilate to his satellites.[2] The wording of the tablet is given as follows:—

By Matthew: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."[3] By Mark: "The King of the Jews."[4] By Luke: "This is the King of the Jews."[5] By John: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."[6]

The variants are slight, and we may explain them by recollecting that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not present at the Passion, nor did they ever see the Title, which disappeared with the Cross on the night after the crucifixion. They merely aimed at giving what they had gathered had been the principal accusation brought against Christ. Thus Matthew writes:

[1] Jn. xix. 19.

[2] [It is, however, right to point out that, given a theory, before mentioned (p. 75)—viz. that the "cross" *consisted merely of the cross-beam* — Pilate may well have done in person what John describes as having been done by him.—*Trans.*]

[3] Mt. xxvii. 37.

[4] Mk. xv. 26.

[5] Lk. xxiii. 38.

[6] Jn. xix. 19.

"They put over his head his cause"; Mark: "The inscription of his cause was written over"; John alone, who had not left his Master's side, could write with any accurate knowledge.

From Luke we learn that the superscription was written "in Greek, in Latin, and in Hebrew";[1] from John that it was written "in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin."[2] Here again, as we shall see, the order given by the latter is correct.[3] Such was the Title buried in the cavern below St. Helena's chapel. Does it agree with that found in 327?

There are only two ancient writers who speak on the subject. Sozomen writes: "There was found, apart, a tablet inscribed with the words Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, the language and letters being Hebrew, Greek, and Latin."[4] We almost seem to be reading the Gospel of St. John. Rufinus, less well informed, makes a mistake in the order in which he enumerates the languages. "Near by," he writes, "was the title itself, on which Pilate had written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew letters."[5]

Hence there is good reason for believing that the title found was identical with the Title hid away with the Cross. But is this Title the same as the one now kept at Santa Croce? The latter is thus described by R. de Fleury[6]: "The fragment of the Title, which

[1] Lk. xxiii. 38. [2] Jn. xix. 20.

[3] It must be here pointed out that the Vulgate [of which, of course, the Rheims version is a translation] differs from the Greek text in Lk. xxiii. 38. The Greek makes no mention of the languages in which the title was written, it runs: ἦν δὲ καὶ ἐπιγραφὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος. Hence verse 38 should be read: "There was written over him, This is the King of the Jews" The Vulgate, however, renders correctly the parallel text in St. John.

[4] Sozomen, *H.E.* ii. 1. [5] Rufinus, *H.E.* i. 7.

[6] *Mém.* 186.

is kept under glass, in a rather mean silver case, is a little board 235 mm. in width by 130 mm. in height; it is all worm-eaten, and looks as if it were crumbling away. On it the remains of two inscriptions, one Greek and the other Latin, may be quite clearly made out, and above them we can see the lower ends of what appears to have been the topmost inscription. The second inscription reads NAZAPEN8C, the third NAZARINVS RE.[1] The letters are slightly indented, as if they had been inscribed with a kind of chisel, such as carpenters use even now;[2] each letter measures from 28 to 30 mm. in height. . . . If they were painted red on a white background—I could, however, see no trace of this—they would have been readily seen when on the Cross. The words are written from right to left, following doubtless the direction of the Hebrew inscription, and the letters are turned the wrong way round, as if they were seen in a looking-glass."

Some points lacking in this description must be filled in by reference to older writers. In the first instance, on what kind of wood is the Title engraved? It would be diverting but utterly useless to follow ancient authors in their disquisitions as to whether the title was written on parchment, or on oak, or sycamore, or poplar wood.[3] St. Augustine opines that both the Cross and the Title were made of

[1] Bosio and Gosselin give it as NAZARENVS. R. de Fleury was the first to rectify this error.

[2] This proves that, as we said before, Pilate himself did not write the title, but had it inscribed, probably by some Jewish workman of the city. [The direction of the writing, and the fact of the letters being indented, would almost suggest that the title had been made to serve as a mould for striking facsimiles.—*Trans.*]

[3] Nicquet, *op. cit.* i. 3; *Quæ materia Tituli, seu ex quo ligno fuerit*, Antw. 1670, p. 32.

sycamore wood,[1] because it was up a sycamore that Zacchæus climbed to see Christ pass.

Again, as we have seen, the Hebrew text is wanting, though a few strokes remain. These were submitted, in 1838 or 1839, by Cardinal Caparelli to B. Drach, the Propaganda librarian, who had been a rabbi before his conversion to Catholicism. This expert replied by a letter which was afterwards published.[2] Therein he states that "the inscription which stands first has been much injured by time. . . . There remains, of the letters which it comprised, only a few shapeless strokes, but these are still distinct enough to enable us to seek the words and the letters of which the writer made use. We must do so speedily, for the time is not far distant when even these slight traces will disappear from the sacred tablet. . . .

"I recognise in the remnants of the letters the writing commonly in use in our nation before the destruction of the second Temple, the same writing, in fact, as we find on the Machabean medals; in other words, numismatic writing. By measuring the distance between the strokes on the tablet, I saw instantly that the Hebrew title was written not in the classical but in the common language such as was spoken at Jerusalem."

After two months' study Drach was able to suggest a text in the Hebrew idiom of the first century, rendering the words Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, of which the lower strokes coincided with the strokes still to be seen on the tablet.[3]

[1] Sermo clxxiv.; *P.L.* xxxviii. 941.

[2] See *Annales de Philosophie chrétienne,* xviii. 1839, pp. 291-308 and 341-352.

[3] [For a reproduction of Drach's reconstituted text, see the *Compte rendu* of the International Catholic Scient. Congress of

Other older visitors tell of certain details now no longer visible. Thus Lælius Petronius, in a MS. seen by Bosio, says that he saw the Title in 1492, and at that time the red colour of the letters was still distinctly visible.[1] M. Gosselin found another witness to the same. "An antiquarian who visited Rome during the French Revolution, and who carefully examined the relic, assures us that the white and the red colours have entirely disappeared from the Title, but that the red has given way, as usual, to a dull leaden colour."[2] Lastly, Gerbet states: "The white colour, remarked by Sozomen, has gone. The wood is brown, but here and there are dark grey patches. Now we know that white lead takes this hue when discoloured by time."[3]

To sum up: the Title preserved in Santa Croce is a rotten piece of wood, undeniably ancient. It has all the qualities of an *album*, on which the letters were scooped out with a chisel and then coloured red. Although it has been reduced to a third of its original size, it still contains the most characteristic part of the Greek and Latin inscriptions described by St. John for the year 33, and by Sozomen for the year 327. It is now our purpose to seek out its history from the latter date downwards.

We hear of it for the first time in the first half of the fifth century. Placidius Valentinian III., emperor of the west from 424 to 455, embellished the sanctuary

Fribourg, 1897, p. 76, plate 3, or Vigouroux' *Manuel biblique*, vol. iii. 1894 edition, p. 577. It is quite fanciful.—*Trans.*]

[1] Nicquet, *op. cit.* 162.

[2] *Notice sur la Couronne d'épines*, p. 45.

[3] Ollivier (*La Passion*, p. 330, note 3) is wrong when he states that the ground on which the inscription was written was white-wash. Lime would not leave such traces as these here spoken of.

of Santa Croce, and adorned it with mosaics in fulfilment of a vow which he, together with his mother Placidia and his sister Honoria, had made.[1] At the same time the clergy had a cavity made at the summit of the arch in the middle of the basilica, near the roof, and between two small columns. Therein was deposited the relic in a leaden casket two hands in length[2] The cavity was then closed by a tablet in baked clay, on which was inscribed *Titulus Crucis*, the Title of the Cross.[3] According to tradition Valentinian paid for this tablet as well as for the mosaics. The inscription last spoken of seems to belong to the very end of the empire.[4]

What was the reason of this removal of the relic? Was it for fear of its being outraged by the barbarians? No; for the tablet covering the cavity remained well in sight. Rome had just before been sacked by Alaric's Visigoths (24th August 410). These invaders were Arians, but as Christians they respected the churches. St. Augustine writes: "I could mention the martyrs' sepulchres and the apostles' basilicas which in that awful disaster opened their doors both to Christians and to pagans. There the fury of murderers was quenched, thither did they also lead those whom they desired to save, that they might not suffer violence from those [of the barbarians] who were less pitiful."[5] The title would

[1] Inde centum fere labentis annis, Placidius Valentianus III. Imperator . . . in solutionem voti sui, ac matris Placidiæ et Honoriæ sororis, opere vermiculato eam exornavit. (Excerpt from the inscription.)

[2] Una capsula plumbea duarum palmarum. Nicquet, *op. cit.* 162. The Roman "hand" measured slightly over eight inches.

[3] See a picture of it in R. de Fleury, pl. xix. p. 190.

[4] R. de Fleury, *ib.* pp. 186, 188.

[5] *De Civ. Dei*, i. 1; *P.L.* xli. We know from St. Jerome's letters

have been perfectly safe, and for like reasons, in the later incursions of the Vandals under Genseric in 455, and of the Suevi under Ricimer in 472.

The real danger was the ill-advised piety of the faithful. The common people considered the saints as powerful protectors, and they desired, above all, to secure possession of their relics, which they looked on as a guarantee of safety and good luck.

Ceste grant garantisson,

as the biographer of St. Germer puts it.[1] Such feelings as this account for the robbery of the bodies of SS. Marcellinus and Peter by the men of Hilduin, abbot of Mulinheim,[2] and the many other deeds of a like kind, such as happened after the taking of Constantinople in 1204.[3] It was not an unknown thing for people, under pretence of kissing it, to bite off a piece of the True Cross in order to appropriate it for themselves.[4]

The Church, naturally desirous of discouraging such deeds, from the fifth century onwards was accustomed to secrete the relics in the walls of her sacred edifices.[5]

Soon another feeling had to be guarded against. St. Gregory the Great, writing to Constantina, empress of Constantinople, says: "In Latin countries,

that Marcella and her daughter Principia found safety in the basilica of St. Paul, whither they had been taken by some Visigoths, who had been struck by their appearance. Jerome, *Ep.* cxxvii. *ad Principiam*; *P.L.* xxii. 1095.

[1] Petit de Julleville, *Hist. de la langue et de la litt. françaises,* vol. i. p. 11.

[2] Eginhardus, *Hist. Translationis martyrum Marcellini et Petri,* cap. iii.; *P.L.* civ.

[3] *Cf.* Riant, *Exuviæ*; Achille Luchaire, *Le Culte des reliques* (*Revue de Paris,* July 1900, p. 189).

[4] *Peregrinatio Silviæ,* Rome, 1887, p. 96.

[5] Paulinus of Nola, Ep. 32 ad Sev.; *P.L.* lxi. cols. 335-336; *Poemata,* xxvi. vers. 103 *ff.* col. 641.

and in fact throughout the West, it is considered unlucky, and indeed sacrilegious, to touch the bodies of the saints. The rash man who would dare to do such a thing would not long go unpunished."[1] To take one instance, the gifts of St. Helena to the church at Treves remained for nearly four centuries without a bishop daring to open the chest in which they lay. In fact, the result was that nobody knew what it contained.[2]

These reasons explain why the title of the cross was taken from the altar and mounted high up beyond the reach of thieves. But though in this position it was safe from all attempts, there was another danger to be feared. With time the tablet became the same colour as the walls, and the words *Titulus Crucis* being no longer visible from the nave of the church, the title was forgotten, and men's only thought was for those relics of the Cross which they could still see. As no one knew the whereabouts of the Title, it was commonly considered to have perished.

It is easy to explain how it slipped people's memory. In 1143 Rome was in revolt; in the following year Arnold of Brescia strove to re-establish the Republic. In 1145 Pope Lucius II. was summoned to renounce his rights as king; he refused, and was expelled. In 1146 another Pope, Eugenius III., was forced to fly to France. After many troubles the Popes took refuge at Avignon. In such times, when blood is shed in every direction, and when three Popes are all claiming their right to the tiara, people would have small thought for the relics of the Passion, especially for those hermetically sealed and hidden away.

* * * * *

[1] Ep. bk. iv. 30; *P.L.* lxxvii. 702.

[2] *Acta SS.* 13th January. *De S. Agricio.*

On 1st February 1492 Rome received the news that Ferdinand the Catholic had taken Granada. That same day the Title unexpectedly came to light. Gonzalez de Mendoza, titular cardinal of Santa Croce, was just then repairing the roof of his basilica above the apex of the arch in which was the tablet before spoken of. A hammer missed its mark, and striking the tablet, split it, the two pieces falling into the cavity behind. The workmen examined the hiding-place thus disclosed, and took out the two fragments of the broken tablet and the leaden chest which they found within.

Then the cardinal was apprised of the find, and to his great astonishment read the words *Titulus Crucis*, and found on the reliquary the seal of Cardinal Gerard Caccianemici,[1] corresponding with the year 1143.[2]

Of course, the find was hailed with joy. No one doubted the identity of the find with the Title inscribed by Pilate, but as usual, popular fancy magnifying the event, it was soon noised abroad that the whole Title had been discovered. Cardinal de Mendoza ordered the relic to be solemnly shown to the people, and all Rome went to kneel before it. Innocent VIII.[3] went to see it, and directed that it should be shown under glass from the altar.[4]

[1] This fact, says R. de Fleury (p. 186, note 1), is borne out by the investigations made by de Corrieris, *De Sessorianis reliquiis*, 1829, p. 89. Gerbet, who derives his information from the same source, says: "A titular cardinal of this church, who afterwards became Pope under the title of Lucius II., had sealed the casket and inscribed his name on it. The seals and the inscription were recovered with the relic" (*Rome chrétienne*, vol. ii. p. 280).

[2] This was our reason for not dealing with the period anterior to 1143.

[3] Lælius Petronius, quoted by Bosio, *Crux triumphans*, *L.* i. c. xi.

[4] Bosio, *ib.*

From all this it would seem that the authenticity of the Title is well established. At first the property of Helena, it was transported to Constantinople to be kept in the treasury of the emperors of the East. Less than a century later we find a portion of it at Santa Croce. If then it was not given by Constantine himself, it must have been the gift of one of his immediate successors. At any rate the donor must have been known. And since the time of Valentinian surely no relic has been more carefully preserved. At the summit of an arch, it was in a place never touched save on the occasion of repairs, which are not often needed in the course of centuries. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the Title has been called into question on philological grounds.

Some have pointed to the direction of the writing. The Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are all written from right to left—*i.e.* in Semitic fashion—and, moreover, the letters are all turned the wrong way round. This, it is argued, betrays the hand of a forger.

Gretser [1] and Nicquet[2] have carefully hunted out Latin and Greek inscriptions written backwards. In Pausanias, in connection with the statue of Agamemnon, they found a proof that the Greeks sometimes wrote from right to left. They also found coins inscribed in like fashion. R. de Fleury also discovered such inscriptions in the Pisa Campanile, on certain vases in the Uffizii museum at Florence, and in the note-books belonging to Leonardo da Vinci, and now kept at the library of the Paris Institut.[3]

But it is needless to follow these writers in their appeal to such anomalies. The writing on the Title

[1] *De Cruce Christi*, i. c. xxviii.
[2] *Titulus S. Crucis, L.* i. c. xii. p. 86 *sq.*
[3] *Mém.* p. 192.

must be judged not by modern standards, but by those of the time it dates from. We must not forget that in A.D. 33 at Jerusalem ordinary writing went from right to left, that in the surrounding countries —*e.g.* in Phœnicea this direction was likewise a characteristic. The Greeks, who borrowed their alphabet from the Phœnicean, began by writing from right to left.[1] So true is this, that when Fr. Lenormant prepared a table of the intermediate writing of the Greeks to compare it with the Phœnicean characters, he was compelled to put the Greek Cadmean letters in two columns, according as they appeared when written from left to right, and *vice versa*.[2]

Then after some time the Greeks learnt to change the direction. This is described by P. Berger.[3] "Quite early the Greeks modified the writing they had adopted and changed its direction. This, however, did not come about without some confusion, of which we find the traces in the inscriptions of Thera. Here we find inscriptions starting from the right, and after winding about over the monument, returning to their starting-point. Later on it became customary to write on parallel lines, in which the left-to-right and right-to-left directions alternated. As this fashion of writing imitated the course of the plough, it acquired the name of *Boustrophedon*.[4] This transition form lingered long, but at last made way for the uniform left-to-right direction, which is now used all over Europe."[5]

[1] Lecoy de la Marche, *Les Manuscrits et la miniature*, 52.

[2] Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. cit.* (art. Alphabetum).

[3] *Hist. de l'Écriture dans l'antiquité*, Paris: Hachette, 1892, p. 131.

[4] βουστροφηδόν—from βοῦς (an ox) and στρέφω (I turn). Pessonneaux, *Dict. grec-français*.

[5] The law of Gortyna, found in 1863 by the Abbé Thénon, and edited by Bréal, is a good instance of *Boustrophedon* writing (*Revue archéol.* December 1878, pp. 134-356).

Now Jesus was condemned on account of a crime which was of more concern to the Jews than to the Romans. Pilate's reply to the crowd was: "What evil hath he done? . . . I am innocent of the blood of this just man, look ye to it."[1] When he dictated the inscription which should be placed above the Cross, his desire was that this inscription should be read and understood by the Jewish crowd, in which there was a large Greek element, but nearly all of whom knew some Latin. Hence by his orders the Title was written, for the various sorts of Jews, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Probably he committed the making of the final inscription to some Jewish artisan, and naturally enough the latter, being accustomed to write from right to left, reversed the Greek and Latin words. A forger would not have done so, but would have been more careful. Such a solecism must emanate from a Hebrew; it is as good as a trade-mark. Hence the direction of the inscription does not furnish any argument against its authenticity. But another objection has been raised.

The fragment of the Title at Santa-Croce gives NAZAPEN8C for *Nazarenus* of Nazareth. This containing, as it does, several blunders has shocked grammarians, but in reality there is here nothing very remarkable. It proves that the workman knew little of Greek, but it does not prove that it is the work of a forger. When St. Paul came back to Jerusalem, the tribune whom he wished to see asked him: "Canst thou speak Greek?"[2] If then even a Rabbi could be ignorant of the language, surely *a fortiori* a poor workman.

The title, or more correctly the Greek word Nazarenus, contains three slips. E has been placed

[1] Mt. xxvii. 23, 24. [2] Acts xxi. 37.

for H. NAZAPEN8C for NAZAPHN8C. It may be allowed that this is a barbarism, but a mistake in spelling does not deprive a text of its value. Moreover, this identical mistake occurs frequently in authentic epigraphs; a fact which has been shown by Nicquet.[1]

A more serious slip occurs in the penultimate letter of the word: instead of the letters *ου* the engraver has used the late abbreviation 8. Gosselin disposes of the objection based on this mistake as follows[2]:—"It is only necessary to remark that we cannot say exactly when the abbreviation 8 first came into use. Father Montfaucon in the preface to his *Paléographie grecque* (No. IX.) instances several third-century medals on which it is used, and there is nothing to make us believe that it was not used long before. The learned religious had himself seen such medals in the cabinets of a certain Foucault, who was well known at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a collector of antiques."[3]

Again, a slip has been made in both the number and case of the word. NAZAPEN8C is apparently a Greek accusative plural, and, besides this, we may question whether it is a Greek word at all. "Of Nazareth" in Greek should be rendered as NAZΩPAIOC—*i.e.* as it is rendered in the Greek text of the fourth Gospel. In fact, the so-called Greek word in the Santa-Croce Title is nothing but a Latin word spelt in Greek characters.

[1] *Tit. S. Crucis*, L. i. c. xvi. pp. 118-119.

[2] *Notice sur la couronne d'épines*, p. 48, note.

[3] R. de Fleury discovered and described three such medals. *Op. cit.* pp. 93, 94. [It is perhaps necessary to point out that this objection is far more serious than our author supposes. Labour-saving abbreviations such as that in question are usually invented by learned scribes, not by obscure illiterate workmen.—*Trans.*]

Let us, however, revert to the last scene at the governor's hall. When Pilate dictated the text of the inscription he spoke in Latin, using the words *Jesus Nazarinus*, and gave orders that these Latin words should be translated into Hebrew and Greek. Now the Latin letter *u* was pronounced as *ou* [*oo in doom*]. Accordingly the translator, knowing little of Greek, confined himself to transliterating the name, but being aware that the Greek letter υ is pronounced as *y*[1] he determined to use the abbreviation for the Greek letters ου. This explanation is Nicquet's. It follows that the name under discussion is not, as has been supposed, in the accusative plural, but in the nominative singular.

It may also be pointed out that the impression we derive from the Gospels is that the text was written merely in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek letters. St. John speaks of the title as being written *Hebraice*[2] —*i.e.* literally "in Hebrew fashion." St. Luke in the Vulgate speaks of the inscription being in letters *of Greek and Latin and Hebrew*.[3] It is true that the equivalent of these words in italics is not found in most Greek texts of the Gospel, but St. Jerome's version gives us at least the Church's tradition on the matter.

We will now bid adieu to these objections, which are already too hackneyed,[4] and betake ourselves to

[1] [For instance, the Greek ΥΜΗΝ transliterated into Latin gives Hymen, not Humen; similarly with Latin names rendered into Greek.—*Trans.*]

[2] καὶ ἦν γεγραμμένον Ἑβραϊστί, Ἑλληνιστί, Ῥωμαϊστί (Jn. xix. 20).

[3] Lk. xxiii. 38.

[4] Those wishing to enter more deeply into such questions find all they need in Gretser's *De Cruce Christi*; Nicquet's *Titulus S. Crucis* L. i. c. xvi. p. 118; Gosselin, *Not. sur la couronne d'épines*, p. 47, note 1; Gerbet, *Rome chrétienne*, vol. ii. p. 286; R. de Fleury, *Mém.*

the consideration of a graver problem. Was the Title entire when it came into the possession of Santa Croce? Did what is now missing fall away through the effects of age? In other words, is Santa-Croce alone in possessing any remains of the Title?

Bosio unearthed in the library of a Roman archæologist the MS. of a sort of diary written by Lælius Petronius, Paul de Magistris, and Stephen Infessura, who were contemporaries of the finding of the Title. Here we read[1]: "The workmen found a small cavity in which lay a leaden box two hands in length, and hermetically sealed. Above it a rectangular marble slab bore the words: *Here is the Title of the True Cross.*[2] In the box was a small tablet a hand and a half in length, one side of which had been gnawed by time. On one side had been engraved, and then coloured red, these words: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.*[3] The inscription was incomplete. Two letters, *um*, were wanting in the last syllable *rum*, because, as I said, this side of the tablet had perished. The first line was in Latin, the second in Greek, and the third in Hebrew characters."[4]

Petronius, having the reputation of a trustworthy witness, has led many historians astray. Gosselin, for instance, though with some hesitation, writes[5]: "In 1564 the Title was again inspected, and was found to have been shortened on that side where was the word *Judæorum.* In 1648 it was noticed that the right-

p. 192. Luppi in an article in the *Auxiliaire catholique* (1845) sums up the work of Buonarotti, Boldetti, Mabillon, and Montfaucon.

[1] Bosius, *Crux triumphans*, L. i. c. xi. p. 60.

[2] Hic est titulus veræ Crucis.

[3] Jesus Nazarenus, rex Judæorum.

[4] See the text in Bosio, *op. cit.*, and in Nicquet, *op. cit.* i. pp. 25, 162.

[5] *Couronne d'épines*, p. 44 *sq.*

hand side too, where the word Jesus had been, had also disappeared, so that now nothing remained except Nazarenus re." Hence it was inferred that the Title, which was almost intact in 1492, had gradually fallen to pieces, to the extent of retaining only one-third of its original surface. The view of Gosselin was generally adopted, and is now found in nearly all books which treat of the subject.

Yet how utterly untrustworthy all this is! In the first instance, with regard to the verification of the relic in 1648. Presumably Gosselin is alluding to the copy made by the Cistercians and published in that year.[1] But Bosio, as far back as 1617, had already given a plate showing that the Title was then what it is at present. As to a verification in 1564, it would be vain to seek for one outside the works of Suarez, bishop of Coimbra, who narrates that when returning from the Council of Trent with other bishops, he was shown a board with the words: *Jesus of Nazareth, King.*[2]

If we examine these testimonies attentively, we see that the accounts given by Petronius and by Suarez are inexact. (Suarez says nothing of the Greek text.) At this time the relic was on view, for Innocent VIII. had seen that it was put in a glass case. The clergy were free to inspect it, and any "verification" in the proper sense of the word would have been meaningless.

Petronius's account is inaccurate from beginning to end. He read *hic est Titulus Veræ Crucis* where

[1] *Imago triumphalis vivificæ Crucis* . . . qualis anno 1648, Romæ, apud Cisterciences intra Basilicam S. Crucis-in-Jerusalem seu intra Capellam S. Reliquiarum conspecta est. Reproduced by M. Delfin Donadiu y Puignau, *Compte rendu du Congrès cath. de Fribourg*, 1897, *sciences rel.* p. 65, plate 1.

[2] Nicquet, L. i. c. xxv. p. 163.

there was only *Titulus Crucis*; he saw a marble slab[1] when there was only an earthenware tablet; he states that the order of the texts was as follows:—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, whereas in reality it was Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Why then need we heed him when he states that the box was two hands, and the Title one hand and a half in length?

Rohault de Fleury very rightly investigated the matter mathematically, and thus sums up his investigations: "The words *Nazarinus re* measure 210 mm.; the inscription as given by Petronius's diary: *Jesus Nazarenus rex Judæorum*, would have taken at least double that length — *i.e.* much more than 333[2] mm. Hence Petronius is wrong somewhere, either in his measurement or in his text; my impression is that he is wrong in both."[3] Had Petronius's measurements been accurate, the original casket could never have contained the Title.

The Title, as it now is, measures 235 mm. by 130. The earthenware tablet measures 325 mm. by 210; we can thus form some idea of the measurements of the leaden receptacle which was in the cavity closed by this tablet. As de Fleury rightly points out, it is evident that the tablet was made expressly for the Title as we now know it. Hence what was found in 1492 is just the Title now kept at Santa-Croce, and nothing more.

I should fancy that Petronius, as soon as he heard of the find, ran to the basilica and mingled with the crowd, but was kept at a distance by the prelates and clergy kneeling about the relic. He probably saw

[1] Super eam erat lapis quidam quadrangulus marmoreus.

[2] A hand and a half, the measure used by Petronius, would make exactly 333 mm.

[3] R. de Fleury, *Mém.* 189.

very little, and obtained most of his information from hearsay. He had been told that it was the Title of the Cross. To make an entry in his diary he probably opened the Gospels in the middle, and copied St. Luke's account of the order of the languages. It was perhaps lucky that he did not open it at the end of the Gospel of St. John. Had he done so, and copied his text faithfully, we should probably even now be unaware of the other mistakes he committed.

Bosio had quoted the testimony of Petronius merely as an archæological curiosity. He himself adds: "From its form and size we can see quite clearly that the most Holy Title had been broken in order that its fragments might be distributed over the Christian world. *It scarcely stands for more than a third of the whole Title of the Holy Cross.*"[1]

The *Crux Triumphans* was published at Antwerp in 1617. The Reformation wars were scarcely over. Calvin had maliciously twitted Catholics with their many churches which claimed to possess the Title of the Cross. In fact, this multiplication of the Title furnished a standing joke to the Genevese Reformer. Some good Catholics, with more faith than common-sense, had repeated the evasions of St. Paulinus of Nola and St. Cyril, and maintained that the Title was animated with a recuperative power which could replace anew every fragment torn from it.[2] Bosio was better advised, and simply examined the Title. He was thus able to state, and this with truth, that Toulouse and the other places had not the Title, but merely those pieces of it which were not to be found at Santa-Croce.

[1] *Crux triumphans*, p. 62.

[2] Nicquet, *op. cit.* pp. 1, 25, 160. [See the texts in L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 211 *ff.*—*Trans.*]

Toulouse, which Calvin had alleged as a justification for his mockery, never claimed to possess more than a fragment of the Title. As such it was described in 1785 by the deputation which examined it.[1] This relic, which was kept in the church of the Daurade, disappeared during the Revolution.[2] It used to be exposed twice a year, on May 3rd and September 14th.[3] Other fragments are known to be kept at Rome (in St. John-in-the-Lateran and in St. Mark's) and at Agnani.[4] That the Title was preserved entire in several places is thus shown to be merely a baseless fiction of the Calvinists.

* * * * *

At the fourth International Catholic Scientific Congress, held at Fribourg (Switzerland), between the 16th and 20th August 1897, M. Delfin Donadiu y Puignau, Professor at the University of Barcelona, presented a paper on *The True Title of the Cross.*[5] This paper raises two questions, one of no great moment—viz. *In what dialect was the Hebrew inscription written?* The other of the greatest importance, *What was the state of the title in* 1492*?*

With regard to the former point, the Abbé Vigouroux writes[6]: "The family of Semitic languages comprises Arabic, which was, and is still, spoken in Arabia and in parts of Asia and Africa; Ethiopian, which was spoken in Ethiopia; Assyrian, the language of Assyria and Chaldea; Aramaic, which was spoken in the land of Aram—*i.e.* Syria; and lastly Hebrew,

[1] *Gallia Christiana,* xiii. 102.

[2] Gosselin, *op. cit.* pp. 52-53.

[3] R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 90.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Compte rendu,* 1. p. 64: Fribourg: Œuvre Saint-Paul, 1898.

[6] F. Vigouroux, *Le Nouv. Test. et les découvertes modernes,* Paris, 1890, p. 11.

the language of Palestine before the Captivity. *After the Captivity Hebrew proper became a dead language, and was supplanted by Aramaic.*" Aramaic was the language of which Drach had found traces in the Title.

M. Donadiu y Puignau prefers to run counter to this generally admitted view, and maintains that the language current in Judea at the time of Christ, and consequently the language which appeared in the inscription, was not Aramaic at all, but a debased form of Hebrew. This view of his apparently did not find adherents at the Congress.[1]

With the second point we return to matters of greater moment. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century historians had for their only documents the fanciful diary of Petronius and the testimonies of Bosio. But in 1830 Dom de Corrieris published certain noteworthy original documents preserved in the Vatican archives.[2] Gerbet and R. de Fleury often quote this work, but, unfortunately, they do not reprint the texts, and copies of the Italian scholar's work are exceedingly difficult to find. The Spanish professor has therefore done us a good service in extracting the principal passages relating to the discovery of the Title.

The Title came to light on 1st February 1492. On 4th February Leonardus Sarzanensis, at the demand of Innocent VIII., thus describes it[3]: "On the board, beginning from the top, the inscription is in three lines, and in letters belonging to three tongues — Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; they were

[1] *Compte rendu*, p. 8.

[2] Leander de Corrieris, *De Sessorianis præcipius passionis D.N.J.C. reliquiis commentarius.* Roma, 1830.

[3] *Compte rendu*, p. 74.

engraved, so far as one can see, with an iron point. The first line is Hebrew, the second Greek, the third Latin. The Hebrew is written in abbreviations which mean Jesus of Nazareth, King. The Greek has I C NAZAPEN8C B; but the word *Basileus*, meaning king, is wanting, save for the first letter. The Latin has simply IHVS NAZARENVS RE. The word *rex* is not complete, *x* being wanting."

There is here one slight error, which we find repeated until the time of R. de Fleury. The Latin is NAZARINVS, and not NAZARENVS. Apart from some minor inaccuracies, and save for the name Jesus, the above description applies to the relic as it now is. We can now gauge Petronius's trustworthiness, who states that he read NAZARENVS REX IVDÆOR in an inscription which is officially declared to contain only NAZARENVS RE.

John Brocardo, master of ceremonies in the pontifical chapel, also drew up (2nd March 1492) a report of the visit made by Innocent VIII. to Santa Croce. He writes[1]: "On the Title there was written backward, in Jewish style, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin characters, IS NAZARENVS RE." The remainder of the Title—*i.e.* X IVDÆORVM—was deficient.

The two prelates disagree as to the word on the right-hand side of the inscription. Sarzanensis reads IHVS, Brocardo IS. We can easily find out which of the two reports is the more correct. Originally the word must have been IESVS. Supposing that the end of the Title became frayed, there would remain ESVS, and not IHVS as Sarzanensis has it. On the contrary, had the end of the Title been broken off, carrying away with it the first three letters and part of the fourth, the remaining portion of the

[1] *Compte rendu*, p. 74.

fourth might easily have been mistaken for I, and the result would be IS as it is read by Brocardo.

What must we think of the testimony of Suarez, who states that he saw in 1564 the name *Jesus*? Judging by the two witnesses Sarzanensis and Brocardo, we may infer (1) that the left side of the Title was in 1492 exactly what it is to-day; (2) that the name *Jesus* on the right-hand side was incomplete in 1492, and that possibly on this side the Title has since been eaten away; (3) that Gosselin is mistaken in believing that the relic was examined and described in 1564, and consequently that his theory of the gradual crumbling away of the Title is without foundation.

After having dealt with the above texts, M. Donadiu y Puignau examines whether the words of Sarzanensis would not lead us to suppose that the Hebrew inscription was also present when the Title was found. "Looking carefully at this passage, we find that it really conveys very little. . . . Leonard Sarzanensis omits the Hebrew inscription, evidently because he was not sure about it. . . ." Leonard indeed states that the top line is written in abbreviated characters, but Drach, a Jew by birth, on the contrary, came to the conclusion that the strokes visible are not abbreviations at all, but the lower extremities of words written on a portion of the Title which is not to be found in Rome. Sarzanensis, who, like every good Christian in the fifteenth century, was ignorant of Hebrew, simply made a mistake.

The Title preserved at Santa-Croce differs therefore very little from what it was in 1492. Moreover, as R. de Fleury's measurements show that the leaden case in which it was found could not have contained the Title, had the latter been much larger than it is

at present, it seems probable that before the fifth century the greater portion (two-thirds) of the Title had been detached from it. Hence it would be no matter for surprise did we find fragments of the Title in other localities.

* * * * *

After all this it would indeed seem that the relic at Santa-Croce might be left to enjoy in peace its prescriptive right of fifteen centuries. However, the publication of the ancient Palestine-Pilgrims' texts has again brought doubts into the minds of many.

The pseudo-Antoninus Martyr visited Jerusalem about the year 570. He writes: "The Title that had been placed above the head of Jesus, and on which is written *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, I saw it, I held it in my hands, and I kissed it."[1] Likewise the so-called *Peregrinatio Silviæ*, which deals with a period between 385 and 388, tells us that the authoress attended the Good Friday service in the chapel of the Cross, which is situated to the south of the Atrium against Constantine's basilica. The bishop seated himself on his throne, and before him was placed a table, covered with a cloth, around which the deacons took their stand. Then the wondrous silver-gilt reliquary was brought in, and out of it was taken the wood of the Cross *and the Title*. One by one the faithful approached, and touched first with their foreheads, then with their eyes, the Cross *and the Title*, and, after having kissed the Cross, withdrew.[2]

Dom Cabrol, late of Solesmes, who perhaps attaches too much importance to Gamurrini's discovery, writes: "It had been wrongly believed that the Title had been

[1] Anton. M. *Perambulatio loc. sanct.* xx. (Tobler, 102).

[2] *Hilarii, Tractatus de . . . S. Silviæ Aquitanæ peregrinat.* ed. Gamurrini, Rome, 1887, pp. 95-96.

brought to Rome by St. Helena, and that it was preserved there. This passage from Silvia proves the contrary."[1] Must we then follow Dom Cabrol and consign the Roman Title to the regions of fiction? Not necessarily.

The faithful often betray their misdirected piety by their exaggeration. They constantly speak of partial relics as if they were entire. It was this that gave Calvin an excuse for attacking them. Even those who, like R. de Fleury, state explicitly that the church of Santa-Croce never possessed more than one-third of the Title of the Cross, still write at the head of their works *The Title of the Cross.* Now what was in this respect Silvia's attitude of mind, and what was the language which she commonly used? Was she too, given to exaggeration? We can easily judge. One thing we know for certain: even if the whole story of Helena is a legend, it is none the less certain that the wood of the Cross was portioned out, that Constantinople possessed half of it, and that at Jerusalem only a fragment remained. Now Silvia, speaking of this fragment of the Cross, terms it "The Cross," as if it had been the Cross whole and entire.[2] If then "The Cross" has in her language a merely relative meaning, why may this not be the case also with "The Title"?

It is natural to surmise that the Cross and the Title were both treated in the same way, that St. Helena spared of both a portion for the church of Jerusalem. Possibly it was not even necessary to break the Title, for it seems hardly likely that so frail a board could

[1] *Étude sur la Peregrinatio Silviæ*, Paris: Oudin, 1895 p. 105, note 1.

[2] *Peregrinatio*, pp. 78-86, 90, 92-97, 99, 100, 103. She invariably makes use of the expressions *ad crucem, post crucem, ante crucem.*

have resisted without injury the weight of the accumulated rubbish which had been heaped on it in the cavern. Probably the pressure and the damp had split it into several portions.

Nor does the text of Antoninus affect the genuineness of the fragment of the Title at Santa-Croce. The Title had originally borne a trilingual inscription. On this point the united testimony of the fourth Gospel, Rufinus, and Sozomen has been confirmed by a recently recovered text of Priscillian's.[1] Antoninus held in his hand a piece of board, on which was a single sentence written in an idiom which he does not describe.[2] Had the Title he saw contained a threefold inscription in three different languages, we should expect an allusion to this fact, but this we do not find in Antoninus.

Bosio has shown us the right way out of the difficulty. The fragments found here and there are bits of the Santa-Croce Title.[3] At least, owing to the relative meaning of the word "the Title," there is no ground for contradicting this statement. In the portion of the Title kept at Rome the only complete word is *Nazarinus* in Latin and Greek. The Hebrew inscription is not there, and we may well suppose that it was this Hebrew inscription that was seen by Antoninus; the fragments kept at Toulouse and Agnani may also be the missing

[1] Cabrol (*op. cit.* p. 105, note 1) as his reference gives Schepss, p. 26.

[2] [Since the idiom of the text seen by Antoninus is not described, it is natural to believe that it was in Latin. If his description of the words be correct, and supposing the Santa-Croce and the Jerusalem fragments to be different portions of the same tablet, then the Jerusalem fragment could have contained only the Hebrew inscription.—*Trans.*]

[3] F. Martin, *Archéologie de la Passion*, p. 332 *sq.*

portions to the right and left of the Santa-Croce Title.

After the time of Antoninus we hear no more of the Jerusalem relic. Durand de Mende, who died in 1296, speaks of a parchment (*charta scripta*) on which Pilate had written the cause of Christ's condemnation, and states that he saw it in the chapel of the illustrious king of the Franks.[1] Riant attaches little importance to this isolated testimony.[2] Had the Title been given by Baldwin to St. Louis it would certainly have been mentioned in the chart then drawn up, or had it been already in Louis's possession we should have otherwise heard of it. The Title unearthed in 327 was made of wood, for according to Sozomen it was painted white. Evidently the document seen by Durand was simply one of those forgeries, once so frequent, similar to Christ's letter to Abgar, or that other letter, purporting to have been written by our Savour, instructing the faithful to be diligent in paying tithes.[3]

When people have got over the first excitement caused by the discovery of the *Peregrinatio Silviæ* and begin again to weigh calmly and impartially the various testimonies, it will again become apparent that the fragment of the Title kept at Santa-Croce has little to fear from criticism.

(2) *The Holy Nail*

As compared with the relic previously spoken of,

[1] *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, L. vi. c. lxxx. in the *Exuv. Constant.* ii. 250, no. 25.

[2] *Exuviæ*, I. ccxiii.

[3] *Revue ecclésiastique de Metz*, Jan. 1901, p. 10. [Christ's letter to Abgar may be found in G. Phillip's *Doctrine of Addai the Apostle in original Syriac with trans. and notes.* London : Trübner, 1876.]

the Nail kept at Santa-Croce-in-Gerusalemme is from a critical point of view in a much more unsatisfactory position. It is pointless, and one-third of its length is wanting. It measures now a little over four inches —120 mm. — and weighs 63 gm.[1] Twenty-nine localities possess altogether thirty-two nails or fragments of nails,[2] though at the most only four nails were used in the Passion. These nails are diversely venerated, for while some of them may have pierced Christ's members, the others are merely facsimiles containing at the most a few filings from one of the original nails. Hence we must be very careful to discriminate between the original instruments used at the execution and those which are nothing more than diluted replicas of the originals.

The Santa-Croce Nail was long considered as having once been in contact with the sacred body of the Crucified. We know this by the evident traces it bears of having been over and over again filed, to the end that new tertiary relics might be manufactured from the filings.

The tradition is that St. Helena made a gift of it to Rome. Father Ollivier in his work on the Passion[3] shows himself to be even now a believer not only in this nail, but also in the tradition of the iron crown at Monza and of the Holy Bit at Carpentras.

However, the doubts expressed by R. de Fleury[4] seem well grounded. The Holy Nail in Santa-Croce has for its head a kind of hollow cap, in the form of a

[1] It has been depicted by Bosio, *Crux triumphans*, L. i. c. xv. p. 99; Gosselin, *op. cit.* p. 140; R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 172, pl. 16 and the figure on p. 179.

[2] R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 171.

[3] *La Passion*, popular French edit. p. 429, note 1.

[4] *Op. cit.* p. 179.

cardinal's hat, to which the upper end of the nail is riveted. Such an article would be of little use in crucifying, as any blow not given directly on the top would send the cap flying. Possibly this nail is one of the twelve nails which Constantine procured to be made from metal with which had been mingled a few filings from the nail with which he had made a bit for his war-horse. If so, then we can easily explain why Anastasius never mentions this relic, and also why the emperor did not enshrine it in a precious reliquary.

Though it seems that the Holy Nail has no right to the rank claimed for it by tradition, yet this does not deprive it of its history. It has been argued that the missing point of the nail served for the making of the famous iron crown of the Lombard kings.[1] But the consideration of such questions as these belongs rather to a special work dealing exclusively with the nails of the Passion.[2]

(3) *The Good Thief; his Cross and his Legend*

Our Saviour's Cross and the crosses of the two thieves must all of them have been alike, for otherwise Helena and Macarius would have recognised immediately which was the True Cross.

In St. Helena's basilica there is a cross-beam which is said to have belonged to the good thief's cross.

[1] Bosio, *Crux triumphans*, L. i. c. xv. p. 99. Fontanini, *Dissertatio de Corona ferrea*, Rome, 1717, c. i. No. 7.

[2] Shortly before his death Mgr. X. Barbier de Montault wrote a dissertation, in which he strives to prove that the crown at Monza is not a relic at all, but a piece of handiwork, of which the maker was the ninth-century art-jeweller Volvinius (*Revue de l'art chrétien*, 1900 p. 377; 1901, p. 12).

R. de Fleury describes it as follows[1]:—"I saw at Santa-Croce-in-Gerusalemme a relic brought by St. Helena and deposited in a chapel of this ancient basilica. The importance of this venerable relic . . . justifies my describing it in detail. It consists of a huge lump of wood 2·25 m. in length [nearly seven feet], and from 155 to 160 mm. broad. At about the middle of the cross-beam is a hole from 22 to 25 mm. in diameter, into which there must once have fitted a sort of peg. The surface of the wood had once been smooth, but many splinters have been taken from it, principally about the hole just mentioned. Judging by the fibres and knots in the wood, its material must be Scotch pine or fir. It is a light brownish-grey in colour. On a paper which is enclosed with the relic in the somewhat shabby case which serves as a reliquary, we read:

Pars crucis sancti Dixmæ boni latronis."

Opinions are divided as to the authenticity of this relic. We are free to treat or not to treat it as a relic; the True Cross had been made known by the cure of an inhabitant of Jerusalem, but we know of no like miracle which was given to distinguish the cross of the good thief from that of his companion. The Bollandists are reserved; they point out that according to ancient writers the good thief had been venerated more especially at Bruges in Belgium; they also state that some fragments of his cross were reputed to be kept at Bologna in the church of SS. Vitalis and Agricola, and in that of St. Stephen; but on the subject of the cross-beam preserved at Santa Croce they maintain a discreet silence.[2]

[1] *Mém.* 74.

[2] *Acta SS.* 25th March. *De S. Latrone crucifixo cum Christo.* [The following passage from the Arundel MS. of Sir John de Mandeville's

From the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus we learn that the thieves crucified to the right and left of our Saviour were named respectively Dismas and Gesmas.[1] St. Matthew gives a striking account of the cruelty of the crowd. They that passed by, on the road between Calvary and the city walls, "blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying, Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self. If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him."[2] Not one of the witnesses had compassion enough to say a kind word—not even the thieves, for they too mocked at and upbraided him. "And the selfsame thing, the thieves also, that were crucified with him, reproached him with."[3]

But suddenly a cry was heard: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[4] At these words Dismas grew silent. He had expected hard words, and behold Christ, in the midst of His torments, forgets His pain to utter words of pardon, and a prayer for His insulters. Christ's cry brought a light into the soul of the good thief; he felt that to

Travels may be of interest: "Some men trowie yat half of ye crosse of Cryste be in Cipre in a abbaye of monkes yat men call ye hylle of ye holy crosse, bot it is nought so, for yat crosse yat is in Cipre it is ye crosse on ye whiche Dysmas ye good thefe was hanggede." Quoted by Berjeau, *Geschiedenis*, Intr. p. viii.—*Trans.*]

[1] Evang. Nicod. c. x.; Migne, *Dict. des Apocryphes*, vol. i. col. 1113.

[2] Mt. xxvii. 39-43.

[3] Mt. xxvii. 44.

[4] Lk. xxiii. 34.

love one's executioners was beyond the power of man,[1] and he believed. The incident is thus recounted by St. Luke: "One of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom; and Jesus said to him: Amen, I say to thee, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."[2] Words more full of hope never had been spoken, for they teach fallen man that there is no crime which cannot earn remission, save the crime of despairing of God's mercy.

According to the apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter Dismas gave vent to his indignation against the stupid mockery of the populace, and from his gibbet asked the crowd: "What harm has he done you?" The crowd then turned its attention to him, and to spite him they persuaded the soldiers sent by Pilate "not to break his legs, in order that he might take longer to expire, and so suffer more."[3] This detail, however, conflicts with St. John's account, which states that the soldiers broke the legs of both the thieves.[4]

This striking episode of the Passion has given birth to all kinds of legends about the penitent thief. Sister Emmerich, whom we may quote, now that we stand outside of the realm of history, tells[5] us how,

[1] See Ollivier's touching pages on the incident of the conversion of the good thief, *La Passion*, 396-400.

[2] Lk. xxiii. 39-43.

[3] *Ev. Petri*, 13-14.

[4] Jn. xix. 31-32.

[5] *The Dolorous Passion*, p. 257.

during the flight into Egypt, the Holy Family was cared for by a band of brigands who terrorised the Judean borderland. Dismas, the child of one of these robbers, had been attacked by leprosy; the Blessed Virgin had bathed him in the water with which she had washed her own child, and Dismas had come out of the bath cured, this purification of his body being a kind of pledge of the grace he was finally to receive on Golgotha.

In the Gospel of the Childhood the names given to the two thieves were Titus and Dumachus. Once upon a time they had seen the Blessed Virgin riding an ass, with Jesus in her arms and St. Joseph trudging beside her.[1] "Said one thief to the other, 'I pray thee let these travellers pass in peace, lest our companions see them'; Dumachus refusing, Titus said to him, 'I will give thee forty-four pieces of silver, for which thou canst have my girdle as a pledge,' and as good as his word he unwound his cincture and gave it to his comrade. Mary seeing the kindly disposition of the thief said to him, 'May God protect thee with His right hand and may He pardon all thy sins,' and the Lord Jesus also said to Mary, 'O mother, in thirty years' time, the Jews will crucify me at Jerusalem and these two thieves will be crucified with me, Titus on my right side and Dumachus on my left, and that day Titus shall go before me into Paradise.'"[2]

But here the legend has spoiled the story. It was no debt of gratitude that was paid by Christ on Calvary. "If only thou didst know the gift of God,"

[1] This part of the story is found also in Ludolf the Carthusian's *Life of Christ.*

[2] *Ev. Inf.* c. xxiii.; Migne, *Dict. des Apocryphes,* vol. i. col. 995.

Christ had said to the woman of Samaria.[1] Dismas when he had heard Christ's words of pardon for His enemies had conceived a sudden love[2] and pity for Him who had uttered them. For this reason he received the gift of God, and was the first, and perhaps the most marvellous, instance of salvation by love.

2. TREVES' PORTION[3]

At Treves St. Helena passed some of the happiest days of her life. Here after many years of affliction she again knew a mother's joy at being re-united with her son, and the honour of being associated with him on the imperial throne. Here too, as we believe, she first experienced the sweetness attendant on conversion to the Church. A Christian is in some sense a native of the city in which he is born again to the spiritual life by the regenerating waters of baptism. She then, who left so much to Rome, cannot have forgotten Treves, her birthplace in the faith.

(1) *The Treves Tradition*[4]

We are told that at the request of St. Helena, and with a view of re-awakening the faith among the natives, who almost all had returned to paganism, Pope Silvester sent as bishop to Treves, St. Agricius,

[1] Jn. iv. 10.

[2] *Cp.* St Paul, "Love is the fulfilment of the Law"—Rom. xiii. 10.

[3] C. Willems, *Der Hl. Rock Zu Trier.* Treves, 1891. *Acta SS.* 13th January. *De S. Agricio . . . episcopo Trevirensi.* This gives us the *Vita ex MS. monasterii S. Maximini.* See also Chevalier, *Quelques questions sur une brochure intitulée "La Sainte Robe de Trèves" du Dr Willems.* Paris: Dumoulin, 1892. Martin, *Archéologie de la Passion,* Paris: Lethielleux, p. 368 *sq.*

[4] What follows is largely borrowed from Dr Willems' work.

who bore with him a brief and a chest full of relics. The purport of the brief was to confer on its bearer the title of primate of the Gauls; the contents of the chest comprised among other things our Lord's Coat, a Holy Nail, and the Knife which had been used at the Last Supper. These gifts to Treves, as also the foundation of Santa-Croce at Rome, must be considered as part of the undertakings which devolved on Constantine as his mother's executor.

In 402 Stilico, having learnt of Alaric's plans, recalled to Italy the legions which were quartered on the banks of the Rhine. In 406 the prefect of the prætorium of the Gauls seeing himself threatened by the approach of the Vandals, precipitately quitted Treves with his four hundred functionaries, and transferred his headquarters to Arles. Treves was thus left at the mercy of the barbarians, who sacked it four times before the end of the fifth century. So thorough was the city's ruin that at a depth of about seven feet there is now found a layer of ashes, from two to eight inches thick, covering the foundations of the whole Roman city. Silvester's brief is supposed to have perished in this calamity.

After the invasion we find nothing to work on save legends. We are told that an anonymous visionary had overheard, whilst in ecstasy, a conversation between the Apostles Peter and Paul and the protomartyr St. Stephen. Stephen was saying: "I beseech you, my lords, to prevent by your intercession the town of Metz from being destroyed by the enemy, for it is there that the remains of my humble body are preserved." However, the sins of the city of Metz were too great to be pardoned, but St. Stephen obtained that his own oratory should be spared by the Huns.[1]

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist eccl. Franc.* I. ii. c. vi.; *P.L.* lxxi. 198.

The news of this vision spread, and the people of Treves being anxious to bring their relics to a place of safety, hurriedly carried to St. Stephen's oratory the pastoral staff sent by St. Peter to resuscitate Maternus, and the whole treasure of their basilica. St. Stephen's chapel was spared, as had been predicted, and St. Peter's staff remained at Metz until the Archbishop Bruno, brother to the elder Emperor Otto, demanded it for his cathedral of Cologne.[1] As to the other portions of the treasure, including the relics left by St. Helena, we are told that they were handed back in the middle of the fifth century. So far as I know, there exists no trustworthy document which bears out this tradition.

Certain late chroniclers relate of Volusian, a bishop of Treves about 467, that he undertook to rewrite the brief of Pope Silvester. Willems gives this document as it is found in the *Gesta Trevirorum*: "Bishop and primate of Treves receive to-day spiritual primacy over the Gauls and Germans, even that primacy which in the times of paganism thou didst hold from thyself, Peter the head of the Church having by the gift of his staff bestowed it on thee, in preference to all the bishops of these nations, in the persons of Eucharius, Valerius, and Maternus, who were the earliest apostles of Christianity; in doing which, he in some sense despoiled himself of some of his own honour to make thee a partaker in it.

"We, Silvester, his servant and unworthy successor, in thy favour renew and confirm this primacy at the instance of Agricius, patriarch of Antioch, and

[1] See the exceedingly curious inscription engraved by Bishop Egbert on the reliquary containing the staff. It narrates all these things. Willems, *op. cit.* p. 158 *f.*

to honour the birthplace of the Empress Helena, who was a native of thy metropolis. She munificently enriched and specially favoured it, leaving it by deed of gift the body of the apostle St. Matthias, which she had brought from Judea, and other relics: to wit, the Coat and the Nail of our Lord, the head of Pope Cornelius, one of St. Peter's teeth, the sandals of the Apostle St Andrew, and many others."[1]

What value has this curious document, even supposing it to be what it purports? Is it a hypothetical reconstruction made by Volusian according to traditions which he had collected? Is it a duplicate of some document from the Vatican archives duly delivered by the pontifical chancery? Scholars are divided on the subject.

The seamless Coat, after this, disappears even from legend. Almannus, who about 880 wrote, at the instigation of Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, a tract against the primacy of the church of Treves, says nothing of it. Helena, he says, "filled a chest with divers relics of the martyrs, in the midst of which she placed the knife, *cultellum*, which our Lord Jesus Christ had used at the last most holy meal of the Supper. By which wonderful act of graciousness she wished to endow and ennoble her birthplace."[2]

The chest containing the relics remained shut for centuries in the treasury of Treves cathedral. The clergy, though they retained the tradition that it contained certain gifts from Constantine's mother, soon lost all recollection of the nature of the relics. The next time we meet the story is in the Life of St. Agricius, written by some unknown writer, and preserved in an MS. at the monastery of St.

[1] Willems, p. 144 *f.*

[2] *Acta SS.* 18th August. *De S. Helena,* cap. x. § 98.

Maximin. This life was published by the Bollandists.[1]

According to Schmitt this life was written after the year 1019, according to Waitz between 1050 and 1072. It narrates the following episode[2]:—

"We have learnt from the truthful tradition of the ancients that a most pious bishop of this metropolis (Treves) was made aware that opinions were divided on the subject of these relics, some affirming that they comprised the seamless Coat of Christ, others that it was the purple garment with which He was clothed during the Passion, others again that the pledge of love consisted of the sandals of the Saviour of the world. As he much desired to put an end to this difference of opinion by discovering the truth, after having taken counsel of the people and of the clergy both secular and regular, he ordered a three days' fast throughout the city, humbly praying the faithful to beseech God in common, that by His grace one of them might solve the mystery.

"When the fast was accomplished the clergy and the people assembled in St. Peter's church, in which the treasure was. A monk, noted for his piety, was selected from the crowd that he might see the secret of the Lord and make it known to the bishop. He therefore opened the chest in which St. Agricius had hid the treasure, but the moment he lifted the lid to look inside, by one of those secret divine decrees which human wisdom cannot fathom, he was deprived of the light of his eyes."

The faithful considered this sudden blindness as a judgment on their inquisitiveness, for in those days

[1] *Acta SS.* 13th January. *De S. Agricio.*

[2] Which is summarised in *Acta SS.* 18th August. *Helenæ Gloria Posthuma,* iii. § 20.

it was considered a sacrilege to look on relics. Hence the chest remained closed, and the people were no wiser after the incident than before. As to when the incident occurred, it cannot be placed farther back than the closing year of the tenth century. The "tradition of the ancients" to which it refers is evidently the chat of some old fellow who had seen, or heard of, the event in his youth.[1] When was the chest finally opened? When did the good people of Treves discover the real nature of their treasure? No one can tell. However the discovery may have come about, in 1101 the seamless Coat definitively enters into history. The *Gesta Trevirorum* states simply: "The bones of the apostle St. Matthias[2] were buried at the side of the bodies of St. Eucharius and his companions. Our Lord's Coat was deposited with the Nail and the other relics in St. Peter's church."[3] After this it is useless to quote the numerous and equally positive later documents. Since 1101 the seamless Coat has peaceably enjoyed its rights. We must now enter on the examination of its claims to find out how far they are well founded. The questions we now have to answer are: Has it a real prescriptive right to be reckoned as the Coat of Christ? And: What is the value of the deed by which Silvester is supposed to have bestowed it on the city of Treves?

(2) *The Claims of the Seamless Coat of Treves*

We can scarcely doubt that Helena did leave

[1] Martin, *Archéologie*, p. 369.

[2] The apostle elected to fill the place of Judas. Acts i. 21-26.

[3] *Monumenta Germ.* V. viii. p. 153. For the date see the proofs given by Willems, p. 42.

many precious relics to Treves. It is also possible that among these relics there was Christ's seamless Coat. But the point we want to ascertain is whether the garment exhibited at Treves is really the seamless garment worn by Christ when taken prisoner. Unfortunately, the proofs, to which its defenders appeal, are anything but demonstrative. They prove neither the prescriptive rights of the Coat nor the genuineness of the chart by which it is supposed to be authenticated.

To be sound, the tradition should have been constant, and unequivocal, and public—*i.e.* not confined to a small circle. As a matter of fact, the tradition only makes its appearance in the eleventh century, or perhaps in the tenth. Previous to that no one knew what the chest, sent by Helena, contained. The faithful, according to their inclinations, believed it to hold either the seamless Coat or the purple garment, or, again, the sandals of Christ. The archbishop himself was no wiser than the rest. He had not even the right to say that the mysterious vestment had belonged to Christ, since there were reasons to believe that the relics of the Passion were there mixed up with those of the martyrs, there being the Holy Nail, and the Knife, and the body of St. Matthias, and the head of Pope Cornelius, a tooth of St. Peter's, and the sandals of St. Andrew.

Had an inscription been attached to the seamless Coat, then we should have something on which to work; but can we imagine Constantine, who certainly was anything but stingy in the matter of reliquaries, leaving so precious and unique a relic mingled with others of far less worth? We cannot be surprised if those cautious writers, the Bollandists, speak of the Knife and the Nail, but pass in silence over the seam-

less Coat when dealing with the gifts sent by St. Helena to the Belgian churches.[1]

Then there is the brief, which is itself of scarcely less dubious character than the relic it is supposed to authenticate. This brief of Pope Silvester's is found in three works, all of them belonging to the eleventh or twelfth century; in the Life of St. Agricius, written between 1019 and 1072;[2] in the Chronicle of Hugo of Flavigny, written about 1100,[3] which seems to be copied from a more ancient text found at Verdun by Father Sirmond, in a MS. of conciliar decrees; and lastly, it is found in the *Gesta Trevirorum*,[4] a work of uncertain date.

Of course, a brief can perish, but to admit that this one ever really existed we must have some solid reason. Now between the fifth and the sixth century no chronicler mentions this letter, not even Almannus, who, had it existed, would have been bound to impugn it when writing against the primacy of the church of Treves.

We are told indeed that we have copies of the brief, but when we examine them we find that they differ on the very point in question. The only point they agree on is that the archbishop of Treves was created primate of the Gauls; here one writer copies the other; but as to the character of Helena's legacy to the church of Treves, we find nothing but disagreement. The Verdun MS., which may be the most ancient, speaks of *the body of the Apostle Matthias*

[1] *Acta SS. De S. Helena*, 18th August, § 10.

[2] *Acta SS.* 13th January.

[3] *Monum. Germ.* vol. viii. p. 298.

[4] *Monum. Germ.* vol. viii. p. 153, and *Gesta Trev.* ed. Wyttenbach and Müller.

and other relics of the Lord.[1] The anonymous writer of the *Life of St. Agricius* adds a detail, and speaks of the body of Matthias, the Nail, and other relics of the Lord.[2] Lastly, the chronicler of the *Gesta Trevirorum* goes further still, and mentions besides the body of Matthias, *the tunic* [or seamless Coat] and the Nail of the Lord, the head of Pope Cornelius, St. Peter's tooth, and St. Andrew's sandals.

It is easy to understand the meaning of these divergencies. Father Beissel, a German Jesuit, was the first to point out that the allusion to the seamless tunic is an interpolation for which the writer of the *Gesta* is responsible.[3] Willems indeed argues that the *Gesta* is more ancient than the other documents; but Martin rightly replies,[4] alluding to the prolixity of the *Gesta* when compared with the other works: "The most ancient text is the shorter, for we know that mediæval chroniclers were not in the habit of abbreviating such documents, and still less, of suppressing any mention of relics. For a suppression to have occurred here we should have to seek a motive, and such a motive is not to be found."

The tradition is surrounded by improbabilities. The Archbishop Egbert in the inscription on the reliquary containing St. Peter's staff says that the treasure of Treves was sent to Metz to prevent its destruction. Were this the case, Silvester's brief would have gone with the relics, and also would have accompanied them when they returned in more peaceful times.

[1] Per apostolum Matthiam, Judæa translatum, *cæteris reliquiis Domini.*

[2] Cum clavo cæterisque reliquiis Domini.

[3] S. Beissel, *Geschichte des heiligen Rockes.* Treves, 1889. 2nd ed. p. 60.

[4] Martin, *Arch. de la Pass.* 371.

We must go further, and say that the whole story of Volusian's reconstruction in 467 of Silvester's brief is apocryphal. Had the church of Treves possessed such a duplicate she would have known the character of the treasure which was kept so secretly; she would never have forgotten the presence of the seamless Coat, for the document would have been sufficient to set any doubts at rest. The fact of the archbishop having been obliged to depute a monk to examine the contents of the chest proves that he did not possess the reconstructed brief, probably because such an article never existed.

Moreover, the document contains some glaring inaccuracies. It speaks of Helena as having been born at Treves, whereas Pope Silvester would have known that she was really a native of Drepane. It confers on the archbishop of Treves the title of primate of the Gauls, whereas such a dignity was at that time not in the power of the Roman pontiff. In the early ages ecclesiastical divisions of territory were based on the civil divisions.[1] The Council of Chalcedon (451) ordained that in the case of a new town being founded, the spiritual government of the place was to follow the temporal.[2] Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, could not persuade the Nicene Council to declare him independent of the bishop of Cæsarea, which was the capital of the province of Palestine. Now Treves being the headquarters of the prætorium was by this very fact the metropolitan diocese of Gaul.

[1] Longnon, *Géographie de la Gaule au VI^e siècle*, Paris: Hachette, 1878, p. 2.

[2] Si vero quælibet civitas per auctoritatem imperialem renovata est, aut si renovetur in posterum, civilibus et publicis ordinationibus, etiam ecclesiarum parochianarum sequatur ordinatio. Canon xvii. Labbe, *Sacrorum Conciliorm collectio* (Florentiæ, 1767), tom. vii.

Its bishop having to treat with the civil powers of the three Gallic provinces was necessarily, from the beginning, primate of the Gauls, and such indeed he remained so long as the civil arrangements remained the same. When in 408 the prefecture was transferred to Arles, the archbishop of Treves *ipso facto* ceased being metropolitan.

The primate of the Gauls, according to the old principle which was again confirmed by the Council of Turin in 397, was the bishop of Arles. To him, according to the instructions given by Pope Zosimus (417), pilgrims were to apply when requiring a safe-conduct from Gaul to Rome. In 557, to get rid of the difficulties caused by the constant redistribution of the country which went on under the Frankish kings, Pope Pelagius confirmed Sapandus, bishop of Arles, in the primacy, and also created him his vicar; and he did so not because of any claims made on behalf of the archbishop of Treves, but to put a stop to the claims of the bishop of Vienne.[1] Hence the document supposed to have been drawn up by Volusian would have gone counter to the then law.

Nor do we find, when we come to examine the Coat of Treves, that it agrees with the details given by the Gospel. In St. John we find[2]:

"The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified him took his garments, and they made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another, Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

So far as we can now discover, the clothing used by the Jews consisted of several parts: of a shirt; of a

[1] Longnon, *op. cit.* p. 183.

[2] Jn. xix. 23.

machanase, an article of dress which is described by Josephus as being "in the nature of breeches"[1]; of a coat; and of a mantle.[2] In winter-time double clothing was worn.[3]

Thanks to the reports drawn up in 1890 by direction of Bishop Korum and his coadjutor, Bishop Feiten, we now know the Treves relic in its every detail: 'The matter of the tissue, which is of a uniform, brownish colour, is apparently linen or cotton."[4] As the whole robe was in a very mouldly condition, it was first thoroughly cleansed, and then the examination was proceeded with. It was described as follows:—

"On the collar and the cuffs and at the bottom of the garment there are to be seen remains of some embroidery, in which red and green colours are still perceptible. We can also see traces that two similar lines of embroidery went from the neck down to the lower edge of the tunic. From the collar there hung some twenty tassels, of which eighteen are still perfect; they are formed of bundles of threads, apparently of silk; each of these is from 10 to 47 c. in length and from 1 to 6 mm. thick." From this we can see that the Treves relic is an outer coat. Was the tunic for which the soldiers drew lots an outer garment?

The two verses from St. John's Gospel which we quoted above early gave rise to a legend, according to which the piece of clothing in question was an under-garment that had been woven by the Virgin

[1] Jos. *Ant.* III. vii. 1.

[2] [The dress of the Syrian Arabs agrees with this description. They wear a shirt, loose drawers, and a long coat kept closed by a girdle. The latter they frequently unwind and bind about their heads as a turban.—*Trans.*]

[3] Vestiti sunt duplicibus. Prov. xxxi. 21.

[4] Willems, p. 121.

Mary for Jesus when He was yet an infant. As the child grew, the tunic grew with Him. We can afford to smile at such a charming little story, though it hardly agrees with the Gospel, as, according to it, Christ would, from His cradle to Calvary, have been living enveloped in miracle, whereas according to the Gospel His first miracle was performed at Cana.[1] But in one respect the legend is right. The object for which the legionaries drew lots was an undergarment. By the Vulgate it is described as a tunic, *tunica*; the Greek text has χιτών, a word which dictionaries are unanimous in rendering as "an undergarment, Latin *tunica*, both of men and women," as a "sleeveless woollen shirt worn next to the body." Hence the Treves relic, which is a coat, and not a shirt, is not the garment alluded to in the Gospel; but may we perhaps say that at least it belonged to our Saviour?

When reading Bishop Korum's report there is one omission which is bound to strike the reader. Jesus had been maltreated, covered with spittle, scourged, and crowned with thorns. His clothing must have been torn and soiled by His blood, but of all this we find not a trace in the official description of the Holy Coat of Treves. The distinguished prelate's minute report merely depicts a comfortable gown, which from its general appearance would seem to have belonged to a man of means. How then could the opinion that this was the seamless Coat have arisen?

The relic is wrapped up in some ancient tissue, embroidered with birds, which Dr Bock declared to be of Eastern workmanship and to date from the time of Justinian. For centuries it was kept hidden. Doubtless the tissue in question indicates the age at

[1] Jn. ii. 11.

which the relic was last exposed, at the very beginning of the Middle Ages. From that time onwards all is mystery until the verification occurred which is described in the Life of St. Agricius, a work seemingly of the eleventh century. Soon after that time it became the custom to exhibit the relic, and on the receptacle being explored it was found to contain a seamless coat.

Now the people of the Middle Ages firmly believed that the seamless Coat of which St. John speaks was alone of its kind, and they immediately inferred that the mysterious relic was indeed the article for which lots had been drawn on Calvary. Of course, their premises were wrong; seamless gowns were common in the East. There is no need of appealing to the Egyptian mummies; we may establish this point by quoting from Josephus his account of the Meeir which the high priest wore under his ephod and above his under-garment[1]: "This vesture was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewn together upon the shoulders and the sides, but it was one long vestment, so woven as to have an aperture for the neck."

To sum up, there is nothing to show that the Holy Coat of Treves is Christ's tunic. It has no prescriptive right to this title, the brief which accompanies it is worthless, and speaking generally, there is no argument whatever in its favour. Nevertheless, we have reasons to believe that it was truly a gift of Helena, and consequently it may be maintained that it is really a relic, but a relic of whom? Silvester's brief is spurious; but the work of Almannus is not, and according to this writer, who wrote about the year 880, it was a matter of common knowledge that Helena's gift to the church of Treves consisted of some relics of the martyrs, amidst which was the knife

[1] Jos. *Ant.* III. vii. 4.

used at the Last Supper. The forger of Silvester's brief simply transformed the relics of the martyrs into relics of our Lord; such transformations were not rare in those days. Hence the gown kept at Treves is not improbably an article of dress belonging to an early martyr; it might possibly be argued that it belonged to St. Matthias, whose body the chest is said to have contained.

(3) *The other Relics kept at Treves*

Tradition, as we have seen, holds that among the relics presented to Treves by St. Helena there was the knife used at the Last Supper, and a nail used at the Crucifixion. With regard to the knife, it is mentioned by Almannus as the only relic of the Lord preserved at St. Peter's church in Treves. So far as possession goes, Treves can claim it, but as judicious historians we must state that this knife had rivals. A knife, said to have served the same purpose, was for ages the attraction of the church of St. Samson at Orleans. Pilgrims on their way to St. James of Compostella were wont to break their journey to come and pray before it.[1]

With regard to the Holy Nail of Treves, it is open to the same objections as that of Rome. Riant's *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae* gives us the only means of distinguishing the authentic Nails from those which are but copies. According to the Western sixth-century tradition, which is vouched for by St. Gregory of Tours,[2] the Nails were thus distributed: of the first was made the bit already alluded to, the

[1] Couret, *Les Légendes du S. Sépulcre*, p. 47, note 1. He quotes as his reference the *Codex* of St. James Compostella (*Liber de miraculis S. Jacobi*), iv. ed. Fita. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1882.

[2] *De Gloria Martyrum*, i. 6.; *P.L.* lxxi. 710.

second was placed on the imperial crown, the third was thrown into the Adriatic, the fourth was placed in the nimbus of the statue of Apollo, which represented Constantine at the summit of the great stone column at Constantinople. Of course, this is all the merest legend, but it serves to prove one thing—viz. that the Holy Nail of Treves was not known at this period.

We know now that the Eastern emperors preserved most jealously the Nails of the Passion. In 1092 Alexius Comnenus I. sent to Robert of Flanders an urgent appeal to the whole of Christendom. In his letter he enumerates the relics which he has in his possession, and which he wishes to be saved from the fury of the Mohammedans; among these relics were the Nails.[1] Nicholas Sœmundarson, abbot of Thingeyrar in Iceland saw them there in 1157.[2] A like testimony is given by William of Tyre in 1190.[3] In 1190 likewise, an anonymous traveller paid a visit to the treasure kept in the imperial palace chapel of Buccoleon, and states that he there saw a whole nail and half of another; the lower portion of the latter, he says, was given to the Emperor Charlemagne, and is now at the abbey of St. Denis; the third had been left in the royal chapel at Jerusalem;[4] and the fourth had served to make a bit for Constantine's horse. In 1157 this so-called Holy Bit formed a part of the imperial treasure.[5] The two former Nails were seen as late as 1203 by Robert of Clari.[6] The first can be

[1] Clavi quibus affixus fuit. *Exuviæ,* ii. 208.

[2] *Exuviæ,* ii. 213.

[3] *Hist. belli sacri,* xx. cap. 23; *Exuviæ,* ii. 216.

[4] Descriptio sanctuarii Constantinopolitani. *Exuviæ,* ii. 217.

[5] Nicolaus Thingerensis, *Exuviæ,* ii. 214.

[6] Li estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Constantinoble. *Exuviæ,* ii. 231.

no other than that which Constantine was accustomed to carry sometimes on his helmet and at other times on his crown.

Hence Riant has really succeeded in locating all the four Nails. Had we room here to enter into the question at all fully, we might be able to show that the Nail which was once in the royal chapel of Jerusalem has been lost, that the Bit is probably at Carpentras, that the whole Nail once kept at Constantinople was ceded to the Venetians in the crusade of 1204, and that Notre-Dame at Paris has inherited the portion of the Nail once venerated at the abbey of St. Denis.

But there is a tradition, which is borne out by some archæological discoveries, that Constantine had twelve copies made, each of which contained a little of the filings from his horse's bit. Doubtless it is one of these that Treves, like Santa-Croce, possesses.

The Treves Nail is without its sharp end, which is venerated at Toul.[1] According to the inventory made in 1776 the Nail was kept in an ivory reliquary which had been made at the command of Egbert, a tenth-century bishop.[2] The *Life of St. Agricius*[3] relates in connection with it a curious tale. Bruno, brother of the Emperor Otto I. (936-973), being desirous of obtaining it by hook or by crook, bribed the custodian of the Treves treasure. The latter accordingly made so perfect a duplicate of the Nail that one could not possibly be told from the other. He received the price of his simony, put the imitation in the reliquary, and wrapping the real relic in a linen cloth, he put it in his pocket. But, wonderful to relate, blood began to flow from the Nail, and soon

[1] R. de Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 180.

[2] Martin, *op. cit.* p. 329. [3] *Acta SS.* 13th January.

the unhappy wretch was drenched, and being seized with remorse, avowed his crime. Brower places this episode in the year 1027, and states that it was Theodore, bishop of Metz, who corrupted the warden.

The anonymous monk of St. Maximinus, and also Justus Lipsius, state that a female demoniac, at the moment when she was being exorcised, revealed that the Nail had pierced Christ's right foot. In the nineteenth century the relic again passed through some vicissitudes, and only returned to the cathedral of Treves after having been in the hands of the Nassau government from the year 1805 to 1838, and afterwards in the possession of Prince Metternich.

3. BESANÇON'S PORTION

St. Helena spent at Besançon a few hours in the greatest distress of mind. She had followed the army of her son, who was marching against Maxentius, and she stopped here to rest and pray at the little church of St. Stephen. Here she offered her fasts, and her tears, and her prayers to the God of Battles,[1] beseeching Him to have regard for her faith. The vow she made here, she performed in due season, and after the victory at the Milvian bridge a basilica replaced the humble chapel in which she had prayed.

But she was not satisfied with so small a token of her affection for this city. When she had exhumed the Cross and the Holy Places she proceeded to collect all the souvenirs she could find of the Apostolic age. Many such articles she directed should be given to Besançon. Unfortunately, the case containing them was confided to the skipper of a barge which was ascending the Rhône loaded with marble. The boat

[1] Hugo of Flavigny, *Monum. Germ.* vol. viii. p. 298.

safely entered the Doubs, but there it was wrecked when still at some distance from the city.[1] The gift of the empress long remained at the bottom of the river. Almannus supposes that some part of the precious burden was recovered, but history has naught to say of the recovery.

[1] Almannus Altivillarensis. *Vita S. Helenæ*, c. v. § 52 in *Acta SS.* 18th August.

CHAPTER VII

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE STORY OF THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

The story of the finding of the Cross is open to two objections. It has been contended that it presupposes an impossibility—viz. the incorruptibility of the wood; and secondly, that the texts on which the story is based are unreliable. The first objection may be easily disposed of, but the second will require more ample consideration.

It has been said that a piece of common deal, such as was the wood of the Cross, could not have remained so long buried in the cavern without rotting away.

At the request of R. de Fleury, two scientists, Decaisne of the Paris Institut and P. Savi, a professor of the university of Pisa, submitted to examination under the miscroscope, certain fragments of the True Cross taken from Santa-Croce at Rome, and from the cathedrals of Pisa, of Florence, and of Notre-Dame at Paris. As a result of the examination it was decided that these various fragments all belonged to the pine tribe.[1]

"As to the preservation of the wood," adds de Fleury, "I could quote many other equally remarkable instances. At Herculaneum and Pompeii, much ancient woodwork was found intact. Here, indeed, its preservation might be set down to the action of the fire; but we have other examples in point, such as the wooden stays which were found

[1] R. de Fleury, *Mém.* p. 62.

by Simonin still standing in the Etruscan mines of Campaglia,[1] or the beams retaining the banks which conveyed the aqueducts of Carthage, or the piles, recently discovered in the harbour of this same ancient city, which have been shown to be of a species of wood similar to that of the Cross. Some fragments of this Carthaginian wood, which were exhibited at the French Academy of Sciences by Péligot in 1857, were described by Decaisne as belonging to trees of the coniferous tribe, probably to some species of fir or pine."[2]

In fact, we find wood even amidst prehistoric remains. "In the Stone-Age," writes Mortillet,[3] "axe-heads were often fixed to a wooden handle. In the Swiss lake-settlements several such handles have been found with the heads still attached[4]; they have likewise been found in England." The same writer, speaking elsewhere of the scarcity of wood in prehistoric times, remarks: "Wooden handles for all kinds of tools are fairly common, but what we find more often are remains of houses, and especially of piles. Usually that portion of the latter which is exposed to the air, quickly rots, but the lower portion, which is permanently in the water or buried in the soil, is often remarkably well preserved, so much so that such wood is sold to cabinet-makers to be made up into imitation old furniture. In the peat-fields have been found also the boards, which in days of old formed the floor of the lake-dwellers' abodes. In this case the wood had been preserved by the silt which had drifted over it."[5]

[1] Simonin, *La Toscane et la mer Thyrrhénienne.*

[2] R. de Fleury, *Mém.* p. 53.

[3] *Le Préhistorique,* p. 543.

[4] *Musée préhistorique,* Nos. 439, 440.

[5] *Le Préhistorique,* p. 556.

Now, in the cavern below St. Helena's chapel the Cross was in much the same position as the piles just spoken of. The cavern was excavated to receive the rain-water of the neighbourhood, and even when it had been filled with rubbish the water still found its way down through the crevices, and then lay stagnant, transforming the soil around the Cross into a bed of mud, which effectually screened it against the ravages of time.

We now pass to the consideration of the objection of those who hold that historically we have no reason for believing in the finding of the Cross. Until the time of the Reformation St. Helena was universally believed to have found the Cross; but when Protestantism arose, the Reformers were led by their zeal against relic-worship to contest the validity of the tradition. Their first manifesto was contained in the famous Magdeburg *Centuries*, a work which by Brunet[1] is ascribed to the editorship of a certain Francowitz or Flaccus Illyriacus, but which is due to the collective efforts of a school of scholars and theologians belonging to the city of Magdeburg.[2] As the criticism there offered is exceedingly interesting, we shall summarise their conclusions.

"The miraculous finding of the Cross to which Christ had been nailed is spoken of by Ambrose in his funeral oration on the death of Theodosius, and also by Rufinus, Socrates, Theodoret, and Sozomen. Eusebius, who was a contemporary, and who in the third book of his *Life of Constantine* mentions Helena and Constantine having restored to light the spot of Christ's Resurrection, says nothing of the

[1] *Manuel du bibliophile.*

[2] *Quarta Centuria ecclesiasticæ historiæ continens descriptionem amplissimarum rerum in regno Christi*, Basileæ, 1560, col. 1438 *ff.*

finding, and, in fact, it might be supposed that he was entirely ignorant of it, were it not for the following passage which occurs in his *Chronicle*:—'In the year of the Lord 325, and the sixteenth of Constantine's reign, Helena, his mother, being admonished by visions, brought to light at Jerusalem the most blessed wood of the Cross to which the world's Salvation had been nailed.'[1] But was it not an easy matter for a late-comer to have interpolated these words in his book?[2] Hence we have no testimony prior to that of Ambrose."

The Centuriators having given St. Ambrose's narrative, then proceed: "According to Erasmus the oration is not from the pen of Ambrose, and historians are still doubtful concerning its authenticity."[3] They then narrate the different events which are supposed to have followed. According to some of the Fathers Constantine buried a piece of the True Cross under the pedestal of the porphyry column which bore his statue (as a matter of fact, it was a statue, not of Constantine, but of Apollo). The Centuriators upon this remark that "this opinion is a fond invention and disagrees with the character of the good emperor Constantine, who, knowing but little of Christian doctrine, would not have ascribed to a piece of wood the power of preserving the city. If he did anything of the sort, it was probably to preserve the memory of Christ's Passion. We may leave such idle fancies to Socrates and those other superstitious writers who, after having fallen away from the purity of faith, strove

[1] *Chron.* an. 321; *P.L.* xxvii. 671.

[2] This criticism of the Centuriators seems well founded. The passage in question is not found in the Greek text of Eusebius.

[3] As a matter of fact, the *De obitu Theodosii* is now acknowledged to be a production of St. Ambrose.

to disfigure the vestiges of antiquity with superstitious and idolatrous notions, fabricating all sorts of legends and wonders. Such a man was Nicephorus, who tells us that a piece of the third cross was placed by Constantine in the marble column in the Artopolia—*i.e.* in the principal square of Constantinople—and that by the power of this relic all those who suffered from inflammation or pain in the eyes were cured ; and that three times in the year, in the silence of the night, an angel of the Lord was wont to descend like a flash of lightning on to the column, and after having spread abroad the sweet smell of incense and sung the *Trisagion*, would disappear like a meteor. The same author likewise states (L. viii. c. lv.) that many miracles took place about the tomb of Constantine the Great, and before the same emperor's statue, which crowned the porphyry column, and that there was no malady which could not be driven away by simply touching these monuments. Such events can only be described as superstitious, and as things which never happened. They are the merest monkish inventions."

We have quoted the above at length because it is typical of a certain kind of Protestant polemic, in the imputation it makes of unworthy motives, in its insinuation of the spuriousness of a text to which it objects, and in its very adroitness in confusing the issues. The matter in question is the value of the recollections of Ambrose, the friend of the emperor Theodosius, but instead of a direct attack on them we only find an allusion to Nicephorus Callistus, a fourteenth-century Byzantine monk, who makes no pretence of being a sober historian, and who, moreover, wrote a thousand years after the finding of the Cross.[1]

[1] Similar destructive criticism of the story of St. Helena was

The conclusion of the Magdeburg writers naturally met with opposition in the Catholic camp, and among those who resisted their opinions we may mention Baronius,[1] Gretser,[2] Le Nain de Tillemont,[3] Benedict XIV.,[4] and Father Zaccaria.

When in 1844 the Holy Coat was exhibited to the faithful at Treves, an occasion was afforded for a renewal of the controversy in Germany, the two principal opponents being von Sybel and Gildemeister. Kraus, who undertook the defence of the traditional side, reproaches both his adversaries with a lack of objectivity and impartiality.[5] Still more recently, in 1878, Fulda in his work on the Cross and Crucifixion[6] had a passing tilt at the tradition of the finding of the Cross, but, says Martin, his arguments consisted of little more than a few rather heavy jokes on the wood of the Cross.[7]

The last writers who have dealt with the subject are Tixeront and F. Martin; of these the first is inclined to doubt the truth of the story, whilst the latter unhesitatingly accepts it as correct.[8]

* * * * *

The objection of modern opponents of the tradition takes three forms: some prefer to argue that the Cross

undertaken by two other old writers of the Protestant school: Salmasius, *De Cruce*, and Kipping, *De Cruce*.

[1] Annals, an. 326, Nos. 42-54.

[2] *De Cruce Christi.* Ingoldstadt, 1600.

[3] *Mémoires*, vii. 1693.

[4] *De Festis Dominicis*, L. i. c. xiv.

[5] Beiträge zur Trierschen Archäologie, 1868, p. 49.

[6] Fulda, *Das Kreuz und die Kreuzigung*, Breslau, 1878, pp. 244-276.

[7] Martin, *Arch. de la Pass.* p. 260.

[8] Tixeront, *Les origines de l'Église d'Édesse et la légende d'Abgar*, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1888, p. 163 *ff.*; Martin, *Arch. de la Passion*, Paris: Lethielleux, 1901, p. 260.

was found previously to 327, others that the Cross found was an imitation palmed off on Helena by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, others again that the whole story is a legend which grew up about the year 380. We shall consider separately each of these objections.

One point on which modern criticism had improved on previous efforts is in its attempt to shift back the date of the finding to the first century of the Christian era. In 1876 G. Phillips published a Syriac manuscript entitled the *Doctrine of Addai the Apostle* in which the finding is ascribed to Protonice, the wife of the Emperor Claudius.[1] The English editor admits that the ignorance of the copyists has given rise to impudent interpolations, and consequently, in view of this admission, the conclusion to which he comes is rather surprising. He states that there can be no manner of doubt that one story gave rise to the other, and as that of Protonice has the advantage of being the earlier, the story of St. Helena having found the Cross can only be considered as a repetition of the Eastern legend.[2]

Of course, we too admit that one story gave rise to the other, but recollecting that the *ignorant copyist* actually relates of Protonice that she built over the holy place just such a basilica as we know Constantine to have built, we see every reason for reversing Phillips' conclusion, and for stating that the Eastern tale is merely an embellishment of the story of St. Helena.[3]

Phillips likewise shows himself far too rash in his statement that a feast of the finding of the Cross was kept at Jerusalem before the year 327. All that he

1 *The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle in original Syriac, with translation and notes.* Edited by George Phillips. London : Trübner, 1876.

2 *Op cit.* p. viii. note.

3 Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 177.

gives us by way of proof for this statement is an extract from an ancient calendar ascribed to St. Isaac, the great-grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator, who was patriarch of Armenia from 389 to 439—*i.e.* more than fifty years after the death of St. Helena.[1]

Tixeront, who inclines indeed to Phillips' view, is more cautious in his selection of an argument.[2] He opines that "the words used by St. Cyril, unless we are to consider them as greatly exaggerated, presuppose that the True Cross was kept at Jerusalem before A.D. 326." He then infers that "the relic may have existed, doubted by some, and neglected by all, long before the time commonly assigned to its finding," though he does not venture so far as to state that this really was the case.

But when we come to examine in detail, as we shall immediately, St. Cyril's texts in the *Catecheses*, we find that, far from presupposing that the finding had occurred long before, the writer expresses his astonishment that the fragments of the Cross should have so soon spread even to the ends of the earth. His words consequently are quite consonant with the tradition which places the finding of the Cross some twenty years before the time when Cyril wrote; in fact, the supposition that the Cross was found before St. Helena's time is based on no texts. Whatever view we adopt, this much is evident: since the Cross was originally hidden away by the Jews, it must have been found by somebody; and as to the person of the finder, this would be more easily ascertained by a

[1] Toupin, *Hist. de S. Hélène*, vol. ii. p. 327, note E. [The wording of the calendar for 17th May is: "Feast of the Finding of the Cross. See in the letter of Abgar: *Petronice*, and read it."—*Trans.*]

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 175.

fourth-century writer than by a worker at the present day.

We must also point out that Phillips' view makes no account of the monuments at Jerusalem. We are told that the crosses were found in a cavern near to Calvary; the tradition to this effect begins with the erection of Constantine's basilica between 327 and 331, and since then it has not changed; we find it in the narrations of all the pilgrims who visited the Holy Places, in Theodosius,[1] Antoninus Martyr,[2] Arculfus,[3] Venerable Bede,[4] St. Willibald[5] and the monk St. Bernard.[6]

The Holy Places had been buried by Adrian beneath twenty feet of solid masonry to form an esplanade, on which stood statues of Jupiter and Venus. On this point St. Jerome is quite clear.[7] Arculfus is equally to the point when he writes in 670: "It was in this place, excavated by the hand of man, that it is said the Cross of the Saviour and the crosses of the two thieves were hidden and covered with earth, and after a cycle of two hundred and thirty-three years were by God's grace again brought to light."[8] The cavern in which the crosses had been cast, for more than two centuries was buried beneath a huge embankment, which was only demolished in 327[9]; hence Christ's Cross cannot possibly have been found before that time.

[1] *De Terra Sancta*, iv.; Tobler, 64.
[2] *Perambulatio locorum Sanctorum*, xx.; Tobler, 102.
[3] *Relatio de locis sanctis*, vii.; Tobler, 151.
[4] *De locis sanctis*, ii.; Tobler, 216.
[5] *Hodœporicum*, xviii.; Tobler and Molinier, 263.
[6] *Itinerarium*, xi.; Tobler and Molinier, 314.
[7] Second letter to St. Paulinus.
[8] Tobler, 151.
[9] See above, p. 72.

There is another point to bear in mind: Helena bore a letter of Constantine's addressed to Macarius commanding him to build over the Holy Sepulchre "a church which would be the largest and the finest in the world." But, as a matter of fact, in the event only a crypt was erected over the sepulchre, the basilica being built right over the cavern of the finding. How, then, can we explain this change in the plans except by admitting the occurrence of an unforeseen event, which was the finding of the Cross?

We have now to consider the objection raised by those who consider that the finding was an imposture. Duruy, in his *Histoire des Romains*,[1] appears to question the authenticity even of the Holy Places. He writes: "When St. Helena asked to be shown the spot where Christ had been buried no one was able to do so; the bishop himself was ignorant of the position of the Holy Sepulchre. For three centuries the surroundings had been constantly altered, both by war and by peace. Buildings had been erected and then destroyed, and neither Jew nor Christian, for both had been banished by Adrian, knew where the Passion had occurred. Houses were demolished on Calvary, and excavations were made, but all to no purpose. But Helena willed that the cavern should be found, and accordingly it was discovered under the temple of Venus, and near by were found also the three wooden crosses. The undertaking had been supervised by a clever Jew, who gave out that he had in his possession family documents describing the spots which had witnessed the Passion." In other words, we are to believe that a trick was played on Helena similar to those by which inexperienced travellers are so often victimised, when coins which

[1] Vol. vii. p. 144 *f.*

have been previously hid in the soil are dug out and palmed off on them as genuine antiques.

But it was not to gratify Helena's wish that the esplanade was demolished and a hill and a cave respectively dubbed "Calvary" and the "Holy Sepulchre"; there was not even any need of the ubiquitous Jew. At Jerusalem everybody was aware that Adrian had placed a statue of Jupiter over the sepulchre and one of Venus over Calvary.[1] So well were the localities known that prior to the undertaking Constantine ordered Macarius to demolish the esplanade and construct a basilica above the Holy Sepulchre.

Had those who incline to such views taken pains to study impartially the different sides of the question, they would have seen that any hoax was impossible under the circumstances. Three heavy crosses, each some twelve feet in height, could not be introduced unseen into the cavern, where the legionaries and workmen were digging; moreover, the crosses were found at the bottom of a pit, to which there was but a single entrance, at which Helena and Macarius watched in turns.

What Duruy only insinuates Gildemeister explicitly asserts; his view, according to Martin,[2] is that "the pilgrims' intense desire of seeing in detail all the spots mentioned in the Bible soon made it necessary to paint the scenery and discover relics of each event. So credulous were the visitors of those times that, like the Bordeaux pilgrim, they swallowed

[1] [This statement is apparently made by the author on Jerome's authority; it is not in agreement with Eusebius or Theophanes, who only speak of Venus's statue, and locate it over the Sepulchre. See references above, pp. 72-73.—*Trans.*]

[2] *Arch. de la Pass.* p. 286.

every story, no matter how tall. At the time of St. Helena the only sacred spots shown were those of the Ascension and of the birth of our Lord at Bethlehem. Soon, however, the list became longer; the task of finding the True Cross presented certainly no greater difficulty than that of finding the stone which the builders had rejected." Martin, however, rightly remarks on the above, that "the author of this ingenious explanation follows rather too closely in the steps of the Bordeaux pilgrim, at whom all the time he is poking fun, for he, like the latter, fails to make the necessary distinction between evidently stupid relics and others which have at least a great deal to be said in their favour. His manner of proceeding is unscientific, and consequently inconclusive."[1]

The views of the Magdeburg Centuriators have recently been restated in better scientific form. By M. Paul Lejay they are expressed as follows[2]:—"The finding of the Cross was unknown until the latter end of the fourth century. The pseudo-Silvia, somewhere between 381 and 389, was the first to speak of it in connection with Constantine's basilica. St. Ambrose in 395, and St. John Chrysostom about 398, allude to St. Helena, and speak of the Cross as having been recognised by the Title fixed to it; Rufinus about the year 400, and Socrates about 439, substitute for the Title the cure of a Jerusalem lady; St. Paulinus of Nola about 403, and Sulpicius Severus, speak of the help afforded by the Jews to St. Helena,

[1] [Among the objects venerated as relics there are undoubtedly many which cannot be considered as authentic. But of devotion exhibited to relics, true or spurious, we may say what is said of the worship of sacred pictures, that all such worship is directed to the Saint of whom the object sets us in mind. Papebroch, in Willems, *op. cit.* p. 8, and Martin, *op. cit.* p. 373.—*Trans.*]

[2] *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature*, 1890, ii. 163.

and substitute the raising of a dead man for the cure of the sick lady; lastly, in Sozomen, about 443, we find the first traces of the Judas-Cyriacus tradition."

These successive embellishments are the results of a legend which arose in Edessa. "It is evident," concludes M. Tixeront, "that the story of Helena grew up in the East during the last twenty years of the fourth century. In 379 St. Gregory of Nyssa as yet knew nothing of it. In 400 it had already left the surroundings in which it had been evolved, and quickly spread over both East and West; in Mesopotamia it first gave rise to the Protonice legend, and a little later, on the advent from Jerusalem of a story touching a certain Cyriacus, bishop of that city, it resulted in the new Judas-Cyriacus legend. This new legend had just returned to its birthplace at the time when Sozomen wrote. As to the verity of all these facts, the silence of Eusebius, a contemporary and probably a witness, tells strongly against it."[1]

Our own view is that if the texts quoted by M. Lejay be classed, not according to their date of publication, but according to the time when their writers received their information, the result would be entirely different. We shall endeavour to do this further on,[2] but it is important that we should first deal with the curious silence preserved on the subject by the Bordeaux pilgrim and by Eusebius.

The finding of the Cross must have been the great event of the time. Hence if it really occurred in 327, how could the Bordeaux pilgrim have visited Jerusalem in 333 without even alluding to it?

Critics rightly attach little importance to the silence of this anonymous writer; in fact, the *Itiner-*

[1] Tixeront, *Origines de l'Église d'Édesse,* pp. 174-175.

[2] See below, p. 249.

ary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem[1] is a work of doubtful value. It comprises only a few pages conveying summary descriptions of the Holy Places, the rest of the *Itinerary* consisting merely of measurements of the distances between the places mentioned. The pilgrim was anything but observant; he describes Jerusalem as a ruined city, and has nothing whatever to say of Ælia Capitolina and its grand buildings;[2] he evidently swallowed every tale that people told him; he saw the stone which the builders had rejected, and which had become the corner-stone; he saw on the ground the blood of Zacharias, which had been shed between the temple and the altar; also the fountain of Siloe, which only ran on week-days.[3] He states that he ascended Sion, and that he there saw the ruins of the palace of Caiphas, and yet he says not a word of the *Cœnaculum*.

A pilgrim who omits even to mention such a spot as the last can surely have forgotten anything; and, in fact, in this omission we find perhaps the reason of his silence concerning the Cross.[4] The fragment of the True Cross which was left with Macarius was no doubt ultimately deposited in a chapel specially built for the purpose below the rock of Calvary;[5] but at the time of the Bordeaux pilgrim's visit Constantine's basilica was not yet finished,[6] and in the meantime the relic was doubtless preserved in the *Cœnaculum* or in the parish church—*i.e.* in some building not visited by the pilgrim in question. As the relic was only

[1] *Itinerarium a Burdigala Hierusalem usque.* Tobler, and in *P.L.* viii. 783 *f.*

[2] Germer-Durand, *Ælia Capitolina, Revue Biblique,* 1892, p. 369.

[3] Tobler, 17.

[4] Tixeront, *op cit.* p. 164.

[5] Antoninus, § 20; Tobler, 102.

Itinerarium a Burdigala. Tobler, 18.

shown on Good Friday it is probable that, never having seen it, the pilgrim saw no reason for speaking of it.

A similar silence which must be similarly explained is noticeable in the records of other pilgrims. The pseudo-Silvia in 385 speaks of the chapel of the Cross[1] and of the manner in which the relic was honoured, but neither Eucherius in 440,[2] nor the *Breviarius de Hierosolyma*[3] in 530, nor again Arculfus about 670,[4] have a word to say either of the chapel or of the relic, both of which certainly were there in their time. We have no right to press the silence of the Bordeaux pilgrim any more than that of these other later pilgrims.

The absence of all reference in Eusebius to the finding is at first sight a more serious matter. "Eusebius, the Church historian and the emperor's biographer," writes Duruy,[5] "must have been well informed as to all the details of the enterprise of restoring the Holy Places to the faithful. He does, in fact, relate at length the fashion in which the Holy Sepulchre was discovered,[6] but of the finding of the Cross he knows nothing, yet he who attaches such great importance to the monogram, to the *Labarum*, to the Cross painted on the soldiers' shields, should surely have spoken of this discovery, which would in some sense have justified his enthusiasm for the power of the *signum salutare et vivificum*. He does not speak of it . . . because the legend in question was invented after his death, which occurred shortly

[1] [For details concerning this building see L. de Combes, *De l'inv. à l'exalt.* p. 23.]

[2] Tobler, 52. [3] Tobler, 57. [4] Tobler, 141.

[5] *Hist. des Romains*, vol. vii. pp. 145-146.

[6] *Vita Constantini*, iii. xxv. *f.*

after that of Constantine." Eusebius is silent likewise in his account of the dedication of the basilica[1] and in the sermon which he preached on that occasion.[2] Hence the conclusion that Eusebius knew nothing of the event.

But as a Protestant writer, Augusti, has pointed out,[3] it is critically incorrect to reject the tradition merely on account of Eusebius's silence. Moreover, we do find in Eusebius a strong indirect argument in favour of the finding of the Cross. In effect, the *Life of Constantine* contains a letter from the emperor to Macarius, which opens with these words[4]: "So great is the grace of our Lord that words are powerless to recount the *miracle which has happened. For to have discovered the monument of the most holy Passion which had been so long concealed in the earth, to preserve it from the common enemy, and to have restored it to light that it might shine before the faithful,* this indeed is a surpassing wonder." Now fourth-century religious writers make frequent use of two technical expressions, which though somewhat similar denote two different things, these are *monumentum resurrectionis* and *monumentum passionis*; the first refers to the Holy Sepulchre and the second to the Cross. Hence Eusebius or Constantine does speak of the finding of the Cross, and describes it as a miracle.[5]

Tixeront indeed argues that the expression *Monument of the Passion* may refer either to the Cross or to the Tomb, and that more probably it refers to the

[1] *Vita Constantini*, iv. 43.

[2] *De laudibus Constantini*, ix. 16; x. 1 *f.*; *P.G.* xx. 1372.

[3] *Handbuch der Christlichen Archäologie*, iii. 565.

[4] iii. c. xxx.; *P.G.* xx. 1090.

[5] Benedict. XIV., *De festis dominicis*, L. i. c. xiv. notes 10-12.

latter, because if the True Cross had really been found, it is odd that the emperor does not speak of it more clearly.[1]

But the view of this scholar is open to serious objections. Constantine's letter speaks of the *miracle which has happened—i.e.* of something both wonderful and unexpected. Now everybody knew that Adrian had buried the Holy Sepulchre beneath a temple of Jupiter, and the demolishing of the esplanade could by no stretch of imagination be described as a miracle. Hence the writer of the letter is speaking not of the tomb, but of an object which, as he himself states, had been long *concealed in the earth to preserve it from the common enemy.* Constantine shared the error of those who believed that the Cross had been buried by the disciples to screen it from profanation. His allusion to a sacred object which was concealed by the faithful can apply neither to the sepulchre nor to Calvary, but only to the Cross, which, in the language of the time, was the real Monument of the Passion.

The only difficulty in our interpretation of this letter is caused by a statement of Theodoret, who says that St. Helena was the bearer of the letter to Macarius. Were this the case, Constantine could not have been speaking of the Cross, which was only discovered subsequently to Helena's arrival. Fortunately, there is every reason to believe that Theodoret, who was only a compiler, in this particular was guilty of a slight mistake; if we examine the letter in detail we can easily see that it was written after the demolition of the esplanade.

We have not yet suggested a motive for the silence of Eusebius in his historical works, but this motive

[1] *Origines de l'Église d'Édesse*, p. 163, note 1.

is easily found. Eusebius of Cæsarea was a prelate of questionable orthodoxy; as a semi-Arian he had little sympathy with Helena, and, after her death, he was one of the ringleaders of the Arian revival and of the religious scandals which spoilt the end of Constantine's reign.

On the matter of relics especially his views disagreed with those of the Church. Kraus has shown this very clearly, and his dissertation on the subject has been well summarised by F. Martin[1]: "Eusebius tells us that in his time there was to be seen at Paneas[2] a statue of Christ, which was commonly stated to have been erected by the woman whom our Lord had cured of an issue of blood.[3] Eusebius observes that in this there was nothing very remarkable, for the Gentiles were accustomed thus to honour all their benefactors, and that there are medals in plenty engraved with the image of St. Peter, of St. Paul, and of Christ Himself. These remarks of Eusebius show that he considered the Paneas statue, and generally all images, as mere survivals of paganism.[4] We find an even more striking instance of Eusebius's antipathy to relics and sacred images in a letter which he wrote to Constantia, Constantine's sister.[5] The princess had requested of him a portrait of Christ. The bishop replies by asking her which portrait she wishes—that of the unspotted Godhead of the Saviour or that of His human form. It is impossible, he adds, to portray the Saviour under either of these aspects, because, on the one hand, we do not know the divine nature of the Son, which is known to the Father alone, nor,

[1] *Arch. de la Pass.* p. 293 *f.*

[2] Cæsarea-Philippi.

[3] Eus. *Hist. eccl.* vii. 18.

[4] ἐθνικῇ συνηθείᾳ.

[5] This letter is to be found in the acts of the second Nicene Council. Apparently it is authentic.

on the other hand, do we, according to St. Paul, know Christ in the flesh. He also states that he had deprived a woman of her portraits of Christ and of St. Paul, because, as he says, it did not seem meet that strangers [*i.e.* pagans] should see such images, lest they might accuse us of treating our God as an idol. Can we wonder then that the Byzantine historian Gregoras should have called Eusebius an iconoclast?"[1]

Martin continues: "Such a tendency is in singular contrast with the blind credulity of most of the Christians of that time, of which the Bordeaux pilgrim is a good instance in point; we have here the two extremes, and we can also understand why Eusebius kept silence on a matter concerning which he could not have ventilated his views without giving offence at court and to his brother bishops. It is quite evident that he suppressed much of what he knew. Thus when he describes Constantine's triumphal reception at Rome, he says nothing of the statue which was erected in his honour by the Senate. Another point on which he is silent is as to the attitude of St. Helena with respect to Arianism."[2]

Eusebius no doubt intended his silence as a disapproval of Helena's undertaking, and of the worship of the Cross, which he considered as idolatrous. We may well expect such disapproval from a bishop who was accustomed to spend his leisure hours hunting out and confiscating pictures of Christ.

There is one point, too, which is closely connected with Eusebius's narrative, and which cannot otherwise be explained than by the Cross having been found by St. Helena. Let us suppose for a moment that St.

[1] εἰκονομάκος. *Hist. Byzant.* xix. 3.

[2] *Cp.* Kraus, *Beiträge zur Trierschen Archäologie*, p. 72 *ff.*

Helena in 327 had accomplished nothing more than the unearthing of the sepulchre—how then did it come about that in the following year, 328, Constantine laid the foundation at Rome of a basilica called by the name of the "Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem," and placed in it a fragment of the same True Cross?[1] The building was erected on land which had belonged to the empress, and the work was proceeded with so rapidly that a year later the new church was being consecrated by Silvester; it is also noteworthy that the new church from the beginning was known as the "Helenian basilica,"[2] a name which it is difficult to account for if she had no connection with the finding of the Cross.[3]

We will now consider the testimonies of certain other writers; in the first instance that of St. Cyril. St. Cyril was born at Jerusalem in 315, was ordained priest by Macarius in 345, and then given charge of the catechumens. His teaching or *Catecheses* seems to have been given to the public some two years later, and in it we find three distinct allusions to the wood of the Cross. Thus, speaking in the *Atrium* at the foot of Calvary,[4] he exclaims:

"There He was crucified, for our sins. If you doubt it be convinced by this place, this blessed Golgotha—in which we are even now assembled to worship Him who was here attached to the Cross—and by the wood of the Cross, of which fragments without number have already been carried throughout the world."[5]

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[1] Anastasius, *Sanctus Silvester*, c. xli.; *P.L.* cxxvii. 1521.

[2] See above, p. 169.

[3] [It is only right to point out that this name of the basilica may have arisen from the fact that it was built on what had been St. Helena's property. There are several instances in Rome of cemeteries *e.g.* being named after their donors.—*Trans.*]

[4] Dom Cabrol, *Les Églises de Jérusalem au IV^e siècle*, p. 150 *ff.*

[5] *Catecheses de Cruce*; *P.G.* xxxiii. 467 *f.*

In another passage he speaks of the "wood of the Cross which is seen here among us even to the present day, and which, thanks to the faith of those who carry away fragments of it, is already to be found throughout the world."[1] Further on he again returns to the same subject in the following words:—"Were I tempted to deny, may I be confounded by Golgotha, near which we are assembled, and by that wood of the Cross, of which the fragments taken from this place have already found their way to every part of the world."[2]

But we have an even stronger testimony of St. Cyril's to the same effect. After his appointment to the See of Jerusalem, St. Cyril is said to have written as follows to the Emperor Constantius:—

"Under the reign of Constantine thy father, beloved of God and of blessed memory, the salutary wood of the Cross was found at Jerusalem, and divine goodness bestowed on that God-fearing emperor the consolation of finding the Holy Places, which before had been buried."[3]

This testimony seems decisive, for here we find an inhabitant of Jerusalem, who in 327 must have been already eleven years of age, recalling to one of Helena's grandsons the fact that his father and his grandmother had been instrumental in recovering the True Cross.

Unfortunately, it is objected that this letter, though a plausible case may be made out for its authenticity, is not altogether free from difficulties, and that, its origin being doubtful, we cannot make use of it as an authoritative document.[4] But for our own part

[1] *Catecheses de uno Dom. J. C*; *P.G.* xxxiii. 686.
[2] *Catecheses,* De Christo crucif.; *P.G.* xxxiii. 775.
[3] *Ep. ad Constantium*; *P.G.* xxxiii. 1167.
[4] Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 165.

we can see no reason against its authenticity save those due to religious prejudice. The object of the letter in question was to inform Constantius of the recent appearance in the skies of a fiery cross which had been seen by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Oudin and Rivet argue that the letter must be apocryphal, since St. Cyril in his *Catecheses*, when commenting on St. Matthew, had declared that the *sign of the Son of Man* would only appear at the end of the world. But it is difficult to understand this argument; the question is not what Cyril believed at the time when he published his *Catecheses*, but whether there had since occurred some remarkable meteorological manifestation. That something of the kind had taken place seems certain, the only question debated being that of its date, which according to the Bollandists was in 356, whereas according to Baronius it was in 353, and according to Tillemont in 351. Doubtless the phenomenon had been exaggerated, but this was no reason to prevent the bishop from informing Constantius of the event.

Two other arguments advanced by Rivet and Oudin are not much stronger than the last. They contend that such a staunch defender of orthodoxy as Cyril could scarcely have sent an Arian, such as Constantius was, a letter full of flattery, and, moreover, that the letter contains an expression, *consubstantial*, applied to the Trinity, which is never used by Cyril.

Dom Touttée [1] wrote a long dissertation in answer to these objections and in defence of the letter; but as the arguments of the writers just alluded to have gone out of fashion, there is now no reason why we should linger over them. As Kraus says, everybody

[1] *P.G.* xxxiii. 1153 *ff.*

now agrees that the letter is genuine, even Gildemeister, who confines himself to impugning Cyril's good faith.[1]

We may now consider another series of arguments, all of which seem favourable to the tradition which holds that the Cross was found in 327: we shall begin with the earliest. Letaille and Audollent, when on a scientific expedition to Algeria in 1889, found at Tixter, near Setif, a Christian inscription in honour of the martyr Victorinus.[2] M. Geoffroy, head of the *École française* at Rome thus described the find: "The inscription informs us that the chapel at Tixter contained relics of St. Peter and St. Paul, and also of several African martyrs, among whom was St. Cyprian. In the chapel there was also kept some earth from Bethlehem *and a fragment of the True Cross.* M. Audollent has proved that the inscription is in perfect conformity with the writings of the Fathers. The fact of the Cross having been worshipped in Mauritania in 359 (this is the date of the inscription) confirms the truth of what St. Cyril of Jerusalem says in 347 in his *Catecheses* concerning the wide distribution of the relic; it also confirms the account of St. Helena's having found the Cross in 326, an account which is likewise corroborated by the narrative of St. Silvia, who visited Jerusalem in 380."[3]

In a discussion at the *Académie des inscriptions* which took place 23rd May 1890, Mgr. Duchesne gave it as his opinion that M. Geoffroy had somewhat exaggerated the importance of the Tixter

[1] Martin, *Archéol.* p. 264.

[2] *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres,* 1889 (6th December, p. 417).

[3] *Académie,* etc. 1890, p. 233.

inscription; he observed that though the inscription may "prove the existence at Jerusalem of the True Cross in 359, it cannot be said to confirm the accounts regarding the discovery of this relic by the Empress Helena."[1]

At any rate the inscription shows that the relic was already widely distributed in 359, and thus makes unlikely the formation of a legend as late as 380.[2]

The next witness we shall cite is the one just alluded to, the pseudo-Silvia Aquitana.[3] When Silvia reached Jerusalem, somewhere about the year 385, she found that the True Cross was already an object of worship. The relic was kept in a special chapel near the large basilica.[4] Nearly all the services concluded with a procession to this chapel, and on Good Friday the relic was publicly exposed in order that it might be kissed by the faithful. All this presupposes that the finding had occurred a good while previously, and is easily explained on the assumption that the Cross was really found in 327.

For after all, if the Cross was found at all, it must have been found by somebody. Cyril nowhere makes any mention of the name of the finder, doubtless because that name was known to all; but Silvia is more explicit: she tells us at least this much, that everything was done under St. Helena's supervision:

[1] *Ibid.* 1890, p. 176.

[2] [Our author seems to be slightly at fault; legends, as a rule, are invented to account for things already in existence, and not *vice versa*. —*Trans.*]

[3] *S. Silviæ Aquitanæ peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, ed. Gamurrini. Rome: Cuggiani, 1887.

[4] Antoninus M. § 20; Tobler, 102.

"What shall I say of the decoration and of the building itself; of the greater church, of the Anastasis, of the Chapel of the Cross, and the other holy places of Jerusalem which Constantine, making use of all the resources of his empire, adorned with gold, and mosaic, and precious marbles, all under the direction of his mother." [1]

A little further on, speaking of the *encœnia* or anniversary festival of the basilica which Constantine had built over the Holy Places, she states that

"the *encœnia* of these holy churches are kept with great pomp, because the Cross of the Lord was brought to light upon that same day. Everything was thus settled because, for the consecration of the holy church before mentioned, the very day of the finding of the Lord's Cross had been chosen." [2]

These texts clearly show that the finding of the Cross occurred before September 13th, 335, the day when the basilica was consecrated.[3] In fact, the finding must have taken place even before the laying of the foundation-stone, for Eusebius, in spite of his wilful silence on the subject, admits that the basilica was erected in honour of the True Cross. On the other hand, the Cross cannot have been found before 327, because until then it was still covered by the esplanade of Ælia Capitolina. Since the basilica—what Silvia calls the greater church—was erected over the cavern, since Helena supervised the work, and since the 13th September 335 was the anniversary of an event which cannot have occurred before 327, it seems that in Silvia's mind the True Cross, St.

[1] *Silv. peregr.* p. 83. [As Helena apparently died soon after the finding of the Cross, and some years before the completion of the basilica, it would seem that she can only have been concerned with the founding of the basilica.—*Trans.*]

[2] *Silv. peregr.* p. 108.

[3] Dom Cabrol, *Les églises de Jérusalem au IV^e siècle,* p. 128.

Helena, and the building of the churches form, as it were, one indivisible whole.[1]

There remains one author of whom we have not yet spoken, and that is St. Jerome. His testimony in some sense compensates for Eusebius's silence, and the curious point about it is that St. Jerome speaks in the name of Eusebius. Eusebius wrote in Greek a chronicle which St. Jerome rendered into Latin. In this Latin translation we find a sentence which, did it really belong to Eusebius, would put a stop to the whole controversy. The clause in question runs as follows:—"Helena, Constantine's mother, being guided by visions, discovered at Jerusalem the most blessed wood of the Cross to which the world's Salvation had been nailed."[2] However, as we have already seen, the Magdeburg Centuriators called the authenticity of this passage into question; and their surmise has since been proved correct, for the Greek text of Eusebius contains no words to this effect.

But though the text does not belong to Eusebius, it does belong to St. Jerome, who apparently wished to complete the original work by putting on record the most surprising event of the period. To St. Jerome we are likewise indebted for other interesting pieces of information. Certain chroniclers relate that the nails were found at the same time as the crosses, and that the emperor, out of one of them, had a bit made for his war-horse. This so-called Holy Bit occupies an important place in Church history. To justify Constantine's strange conduct, it was customary to quote the prophet Zacharias, who says: "In that

[1] *Cp.* Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 167. [The above argument would be more conclusive were it proved that the esplanade really covered the cavern which contained the crosses.—*Trans.*]

[2] Jerome, *Chron.* an. 321; *P.L.* xxvii. 671.

day that which is upon the bridle of the horse shall be holy to the Lord."[1] St. Jerome, angered at such a grotesque interpretation, in commenting on this passage in Zacharias, exclaims: "I have heard something, no doubt suggested by piety, but all the same stupid, to wit, that the name *Sanctum Domini* was given to the Nails of the Cross with which Constantine Augustus had a bit made for his horse."[2]

We have now to fulfil our promise made above, and to show the real order in which the explicit testimonies, to St. Helena having found the Cross, succeed each other—*i.e.* we have to show at what period each particular witness to it gleaned his information. As before stated, all the witnesses to this tradition are comparatively late; neglecting those writers whose testimony is too recent to be of any value, we find that the principal witnesses are eight in number, and may be classed, according to the publication of their respective works, as follows:—in 395 St. Ambrose's Oration on the death of Theodosius[3]; a little before 398, a homily delivered at Antioch by St. John Chrysostom[4]; about 400, the Church History of Rufinus[5]; about 406, the letter sent by Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus[6]; about 440, Socrates' Church History[7]; about the same date, Sozomen's Church History[8]; about 450, the Church

[1] Zach. xiv. 20. The real meaning seems to be that the words "holy to the Lord" shall in that day be inscribed on the horses' bits.

[2] Martin, *op. cit.* p. 291.

[3] *De obitu Theodosii*, Nos. 44-45; *P.L.* xvi. 1399-1402.

[4] Hom. 85 (or 84) *in Joannem*; *P.G.* lix. 461.

[5] *H.E.* Lib. I. c. vii.-viii.; *P.L.* xxi. 475-477.

[6] *Ep.* xxx. Nos. 4-5; *P.L.* lxi. 327.

[7] *H.E.* L. I. c. xvii.; *P.G.* lxvii. 118.

[8] *H.E.* L. II. c. i.; *P.G.* lxvii. 931.

History of Theodoret of Cyr[1]; between 450 and 477 the Armenian History of Moses of Khorene.[2]

The eight writers may be immediately reduced to five. Socrates merely copied Rufinus, and Theodoret and Moses are simply compilers. With regard to the remaining five, they may be classed in three categories according as they represent, like St. Ambrose and St. John Chrysostom, the Byzantine version; or the Jerusalem tradition, like Rufinus and Paulinus of Nola; or lastly, a personal investigation on the spot, as in the case of Sozomen. We shall consider in the first instance the Byzantine version.

The Emperor Theodosius died at Milan, attended by St. Ambrose, his friend, and his spiritual father. This same bishop afterwards preached his panegyric whilst preparations were being made for the removal of the dead emperor's remains to Constantinople. The funeral oration is full of personal reminiscences of the speaker, and the details it contains regarding Helena's life are a real echo of the common belief in the imperial family. St. John Chrysostom, an independent witness, speaks for the common persuasion of the people living on the banks of the Bosphorus. It is impossible not to notice the similarity between the two accounts. Evidently both in the highest circles, for which St. Ambrose speaks, and among the lower classes, which St. John Chrysostom represents, it was believed that St. Helena had discovered the three crosses, and had identified the True Cross, not by a miracle, but by the title which was still clinging to it. This account, for the origin of which we are indebted to the imperial family itself, is quite devoid of any legendary character.

[1] *H.E.* L. I. c. xviii.; *P.G.* lxxx.

[2] *Hist. Arm.* L. II. c. lxxxvii., ed. Le Vaillant de Florival.

Sozomen, a Constantinople lawyer, made, as it were, a judicial inquiry into the circumstances of the finding of the Cross. He visited the Holy Places, and questioned the descendants of the eye-witnesses of the event, and he states that, without a doubt, the Cross had been found by St. Helena.

Lastly, Rufinus and Paulinus may be taken as reporters who have put into writing the depositions of those who had witnessed the event; they both owe their information to the elder Melania, who about the year 365—*i.e.* thirty-eight years after the demolition of the esplanade—left Rome and went to live in the East. She founded on the Mount of Olives a monastery, in which Rufinus came to live with her. In 386, when St. Jerome and St. Paula paid her a visit, she had already passed ten years among the recluses of the Thebaid, and the remainder of the time at Jerusalem.[1]

Melania and Rufinus being on excellent terms with the bishop of Jerusalem and with all the clergy, were better placed than any others to glean the remaining recollections of the finding of the Cross, especially those of St. Cyril. The latter had been deposed by the two Arian Councils of Cæsarea and of Constantinople, in the meantime he was expelled from Jerusalem, but was reinstated in his See by an orthodox council held at Seleucia. After an exile spent partly at Antioch and partly at Tarsus, he had returned to Jerusalem, not indeed to rule his flock, but to spend his last days in peace in his native place; here he died about 386. It is more than probable that Rufinus, who had been

[1] Lagrange, *Vie de Sainte Paule,* p. 350; Amédée Thierry, *Vie de Saint Jérôme,* pp. 127-130.

dwelling in the same city since 375, sought and obtained from Cyril the information which we find in his Church History. Now the value of a chronicle must be judged not merely by the date of its publication, but also by the date of the source from which it derives its information; and in the case of Rufinus's narrative this is 375, and not 400.

In the month of March 402, Melania departed for Italy. She visited her friend St. Paulinus, to whom she was the bearer of a fragment of the True Cross. Paulinus gave her a grand reception at Nola. Now it is to be presumed that the relic was not handed over in silence, but that it was accompanied by such explanations as Melania's forty-year-long sojourn at Jerusalem would entitle her to give. These explanations are incorporated in Paulinus's letter to Sulpicius Severus, and were in turn embodied by the latter in his Sacred History. Here again then we must push back the dates. Though the epistle to Severus was written in 403, the real date of the information it conveys is 365—viz. the date of Melania's arrival in the East. The letter is signed indeed by Paulinus, but its real author is Melania.

Hence it is incorrect to state that the story of St. Helena is a legend which grew into being in the last twenty years of the fourth century. The letter to Constantius, the building of Santa-Croce, Silvia's pilgrimage, and the testimonies of Jerome, Rufinus and Melania, to say nothing of that of Ambrose, are quite sufficient to dispose of any argument which might be derived from Eusebius's sulky silence. The whole story is an Eastern one, and the West enters into it only by reason of the nationality of the pilgrims and historians who chronicle it. Hence, bearing all this in mind, we do not hesitate to state

that the True Cross was restored to light by St. Helena.[1]

[1 Though, as the author shows, it is not difficult to answer in detail each objection against the finding, yet it is our duty to point out that a more serious case against it might be made out by taking all the objections together. It is improbable, though not impossible, that the wood of the Cross should have lasted so long, for we all know how quickly wood, for instance that of coffins, usually perishes when buried in the ground; it is improbable, though not impossible, that even with the aid of family documents the True Cross should have been located after 300 years, and that if a search was really made, and an object really found, that this was the True Cross, and not one of the many hundred others which it may be supposed were buried in the neighbourhood of the city. It is also improbable, though not impossible, that Eusebius should not have had a word to say of the find. Such a series of improbabilities is bound to occasion some doubt as to the reality of the incident as related by Sozomen and Rufinus..—*Trans.*]

CHAPTER VIII

THE LEGENDS OF THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

No story has been more utilised for purposes of legends than that of the finding of the Cross. Abbé Tixeront has sought out so diligently the various forms of these legends that he has left but little work remaining for those who follow him. We shall therefore content ourselves with giving a summary of the results reached by this able scholar.[1]

1. THE PROTONICE LEGEND

The Protonice legend was published for the first time in 1876 by G. Phillips, a Cambridge professor, in his edition of the *Doctrine of Addai the Apostle.*[2]

Abgar V Ouchama, or The Black, the fifteenth Toparch of Edessa, having learnt of the miracles which were taking place at Jerusalem, sent thither Hannam, his secretary, who bore with him a letter to Christ, beseeching the latter to come and heal him from leprosy, and at the same time offering in touching words to protect Him from His enemies. Christ replied that His hour had come, and that He was about to ascend to the Father, but that He would send him one of His disciples, who would cure him and bring him to life everlasting. This episode

[1] *Les Origines de l'Église d'Édesse et la légende d'Abgar.* Paris: Maisonneuve, 1888.

[2] George Phillips, *Doctrine of Addai the Apostle.* London: Trübner, 1876.

was known to Eusebius of Cæsarea[1] and also to Silvia.[2]

In due course our Saviour was crucified, and Thomas, to fulfil his Master's promise, despatched to Abgar one of the seventy disciples, whose name according to Eusebius was Thaddeus, according to the Doctrine, Addai. Addai on his arrival restored Abgar to health, and calling together the court and the people, delivered a discourse, of which the Protonice story forms a part.

Tiberius,[3] he said, before setting out for the wars in Spain, had appointed Claudius as Cæsar. The latter was brought to the light by St. Peter, and his wife Protonice likewise becoming a convert, departed on a visit to Calvary, accompanied by her two sons and her daughter. On her arrival she was informed by the Bishop James, the relative of Christ, that the Jews forbade any Christian to approach Golgotha. On hearing this the empress summoned Honia, son of the priest Hannan, Ghedelia, son of Caiphas, and Jhuda, son of Ebed-Shalom, the chief of the Jews, and formally withdrew from them all rights over the Holy Places.

Followed by her children, Protonice betook herself to the Holy Sepulchre, in which she found the three crosses, with nothing to distinguish them. At this juncture her daughter suddenly gave up the ghost. Protonice's motherly feelings were aggravated by the thought of the exultation of the Jews; but her eldest son addressing her said: "Mother, see rather in this calamity an interference of God, who wills that by a miracle the True Cross may be discriminated

[1] *H.E.* i. 13; *P.G.* xx. 120 *f.*

[2] *Peregr.* p. 62 *f.*

[3] *Vide* Tixeront, p. 37; Toupin, note E. p. 327; F. Martin, p. 270.

from the gibbets of the thieves." Accordingly in turn the three crosses were applied to the body of the dead girl; the contact of the first two produced no result, but as soon as the third was brought in, the girl awoke fresh and smiling.

Protonice delivered the crosses to the safe keeping of the Bishop James, and directed that a grand edifice should be erected over the sepulchre and Calvary. The girl who had been restored to life put aside her veil, and returned to the palace amidst the cheers of the multitude, and the Emperor Claudius on hearing of what had occurred expelled all the Jews from Italy. The anonymous writer of this narrative evidently wishes the episode to be dated somewhere about the year 51, for in that year it was that all Jews were banished from Rome on account of the conspiracy of a certain Chrestus.[1]

The resemblance between the Protonice legend and the story of St. Helena is quite apparent. In both accounts the three crosses are indistinguishable, and the True Cross is made manifest by a miracle; in both accounts, too, the finding is signalised by the erection of a basilica. Tixeront rightly points out[2] that the legend contains a detail which at once determines its date—viz. the erection of a single basilica. Seeing how well this agrees with the description which Eusebius of Cæsarea has left of Constantine's basilica, it is impossible to believe that the author of the Doctrine wrote earlier than 335. The Syriac legend is but a feeble restatement of the life of St. Helena.

Even the most fantastic legends agree with the Fathers in not pushing the date of the finding further

[1] Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25).

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 177.

back than 327; thus an Ethiopian tradition[1] ascribes it to St. Theodosia, a daughter of St. Helena's; though falsely, for Constantine was Helena's only child.

There are other points in the Protonice legend which prove it to have been the work of a scholar. The name Protonice is a symbolic one formed of the two Greek words πρῶτη νίκη—"the first victory," to denote the first exaltation of the Cross.[2]

The substitution of a figurative for a personal name betrays that the work in which it appears is not a product of popular fancy, but merely that of a single individual.

Tixeront has given an ingenious explanation of this substitution;[3] he points out that "in Mesopotamia we find a misunderstanding, which results in certain deeds which are recounted of Helena in the fourth century being ascribed to a queen who lived in the first century." The historian Josephus[4] had spoken of a different Helena, a queen of Adiabene and mother of Izates, a zealous Jewess, who in the time of the Emperor Claudius made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and there built a memorial.[5]

Moses of Khorene, for his part, describes her as the first wife of Abgar the Black, king of Edessa, and states that she was a Christian.[6] It is noteworthy that the *Life of Silvester*, which is Syrian in its origin, states that Constantine's mother was a Jewess,[7] and

[1] Toupin, note E. iii. p. 329.

[2] Tixeront sees in προτονικη a distant allusion to the words τούτῳ νίκα.

[3] *Op. cit.* p. 186-187. [4] *Ant.* xx. ii.

[5] Josephus elsewhere, in his Wars of the Jews, alludes to Helena's monument, *e.g.* V. ii. 2, etc.

[6] *Hist. Arm.* ii. 35. But it is really too bad of Moses to refer us to Josephus as his authority for this statement.

[7] Surius, 31st December, 370 *f.*

that a later tradition, probably also a Syrian one, which has been preserved by Eutychius,[1] makes out that she was an Edessenian. "It is quite clear that in these countries some confusion arose between the two Helenas; from this confusion it was only a step to the creation of Protonice. Helena, the mother of Izates, really lived under Claudius, really went to Jerusalem, and really erected a monument; the only details which were borrowed from the life of St. Helena were the finding of the Cross and the title of Cæsar's wife. By adroitly combining all these elements there resulted that composite princess, whose adventures are dealt with by Addai; the only entirely new detail was in the name."

The Protonice legend enjoyed a certain popularity in Edessa and in Mesopotamia, but it never left the country in which it had first seen the light, and would probably never have been known in the West had not some scholars brought to the libraries at London and Paris an Armenian and three Syriac MSS.[2]

2. THE JUDAS-CYRIACUS LEGEND

We have already seen[3] that two Fathers of the Church connect the Jews with the finding of the Cross. Sozomen speaks of their having brought to the empress one of their rabbis, who had in his possession certain valuable deeds. Sozomen himself seems to discount the story, and prefers to believe that the only help received came directly from above. But this same story in the Church, either of Syria or of Mesopotamia, grew into a curious legend, of which Judas, surnamed Cyriacus, was the hero; this legend we shall now summarise.[4]

[1] Oxford ed. 1658, p. 408. [2] Tixeront, p. 170. [3] Above, p. 150 f.

[4] We shall follow the Latin version edited by Alfred Holder,

Constantine in the sixth year of his reign was threatened by a horde of barbarians issuing from the quarters of the Danube. When he had seen their numbers he was struck with fear; but that very night a man all brilliant with light appeared to him. "Be without fear," said the apparition, "but look at the skies." The emperor immediately left his tent, and there, in the midst of the darkness of the night, a fiery cross was flaming in the skies, and on it the words: IN THIS SIGN.[1] The emperor forthwith had a standard made, answering to the shape of the cross in the skies, and this he directed should be always carried in the forefront of his legions. The result was the barbarians were utterly confounded, and fled, and soon were lost to sight in the mists of their native Danube.

Constantine, having returned in triumph to his city,[2] sought in vain of the heathen priests the meaning of the mysterious sign; but the Christians explained to him the Incarnation and the Passion, and the emperor, moved by grace, sent for Eusebius, the bishop of Rome, and was baptised. He then overthrew the idols, built churches, and sent his mother to Jerusalem to find the Cross.

On the twenty-eighth day of the second month the queen, at the head of an army, arrived at Jerusalem. Here she called together the wicked crowd[3] of Jews. Three thousand Israelites answered her call. Helena then reproached them for having cruci-

Inventio S. Crucis. Leipzig: Teubner, 1889. Another version will be found in the Bollandists, *Acta SS.* 4th May. *De S. Juda Quiriaco episcopo martyre Hierosolymis.*

[1] In hoc signo.

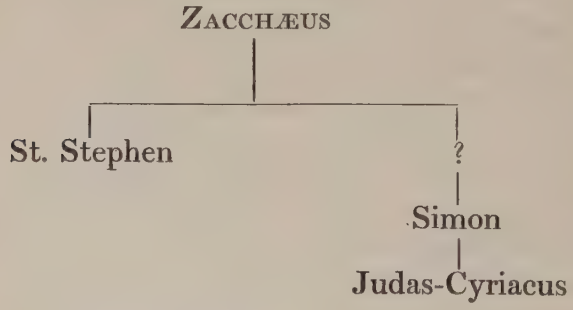
[2] Constantinople is not mentioned in the text.

[3] Pessima turba.

fied Him who had restored their dead to life, and concluded her oration with these words: "Now, therefore, choose out among yourselves those who are most versed in the Law, and let them be ready to answer such questions as I shall put to them."

The three thousand Jews thereupon elected one thousand of their number, upon which Helena addresses them in bitter words: "The ox and the ass know their master, but Israel has not known his lord." At her command the thousand Jews delegate five hundred of their number, whom Helena receives even more harshly than the first. "Go," said she, "and again choose out the most learned men among you."

At this point Judas appears on the scene. Tixeront has worked out his supposed genealogy: he was a descendant of Zacchæus.[1] In his discourse Judas quotes verbatim the words of his father, Simon; this latter calls St. Stephen his father's brother; hence we obtain the following genealogy[2]:—



[1] According to tradition Zacchæus became a fervent disciple of Christ, and afterwards, with St. Martial, evangelised Gaul. Here he was known as Amator, a name which, corrupted, became Amadour—*e.g.* Roc Amadour. According to some he was St. Veronica's husband, according to others he was her son. Ollivier, *Les Amitiés de Jésus*, p. 443.

[2] We are not told the name of Simon's father.

Judas, addressing the five hundred, said: "The queen is desirous of knowing what became of the wood to which our fathers suspended Jesus. Beware of giving a reply, since it could only result in the downfall of our Law; for Zacchæus said to my grandfather, and my father told me his very words: 'Know, son, that when the wood of the Messias shall be found, then will the kingdom of the Hebrews end and that of the worshippers of Jesus begin; for Christ is the son of the living God, and, I myself, I endeavoured to dissuade your fathers from laying hands on Him; but, in spite of me, the ancients and the priests crucified Him, thinking that they could kill the Eternal. Christ, after having been buried, rose the third day, and appeared to His disciples. Stephen, thy brother, believed in Him, and taught in His name, therefore the Pharisees and Sadducees stoned him. . . . I and my fathers believed that Christ is really the Son of God, therefore blaspheme not His name, care for those who believe in Him, and thou shalt have life everlasting.' This is what my father, Simon, told me; and, now that you have heard it, decide for yourselves on your future conduct."

The Jews, after due thought, decided that Judas should keep to himself his knowledge of the place where the Cross was hidden. Then the soldiers arrived on the scene, and led the five hundred back to Helena. The empress, unable to obtain from them any information, there and then condemned them all to be burnt alive. This was an unexpected blow, and, in their terror, the five hundred pointed to Judas, on whom alone Helena proceeded to vent her rage. "Choose between life and death," she cried in threatening tones. "If thou desirest to live,

either in this world or in the next, tell me where is hidden the precious wood of the Cross." "But," replied Judas, "how can I tell? I was not even born at the time." "By the Crucified," retorted Helena, "thou shalt surely die of hunger if thou make not known the spot."

Judas was accordingly let down into a pit, and there left to starve; for seven days he stood the ordeal, but at last, being vanquished, his voice was heard issuing from the bowels of the earth, and piteously pleading: "I beseech you deliver me, and I will show you the Cross of Christ." Immediately he was hauled up and taken to Calvary. But here he was found to know nothing of the place in which the Cross was hid; but falling on his knees he begged the Lord, should it be His will that Mary's son should reign, to show by a miracle the spot where the relic lay. Whereupon the earth quaked and a thick cloud of sweet-smelling smoke rose from the ground. Judas, giving thanks to the Lord of Ages, girded his loins, and taking a spade, began to dig with zest; at a depth of some twenty paces he found the three crosses, and carried them to Helena. At noon there passed by the funeral of a young man, and his restoration to life proved which of the three was the True Cross.

Satan, being now conquered, in angry tones predicts that he will raise up an apostate sovereign, and that the latter will cause Judas to perish amidst awful torments, and that Judas, at the height of his misery, will deny Christ; Judas, however, nothing daunted, promptly bids the fiend return to his fiery dungeon.

Helena now had the Cross placed in a golden reliquary, all covered with precious stones, and directed that a basilica should be built over Calvary.

Judas is subsequently baptised, and the bishop who had converted him (in these Acts we do not find any mention of the name of Macarius) falls asleep in the Lord. Eusebius, bishop of Rome, is therefore summoned by the queen, and by him Judas is consecrated bishop of Jerusalem, and alters his name to Cyriacus.

But though Helena has been so successful, she is still sorrowful because of the absence of the nails. Judas accordingly returns to Golgotha, and betakes himself to prayer. Then a light, brighter even than the sun, illumines the place of the finding, and the Nails of the Passion, shining like molten gold, betray their presence; Helena carried away with her two of them, out of which she made a bit for the emperor's war-horse; she also banished all Jews from Judea, and the mission assigned her by Providence being now accomplished, she died peacefully on the XVI. of the Calends of May, directing that the feast of the Finding of the Cross should be kept on the V. of the nones of the same month. Finally, Judas-Cyriacus and his mother Anna suffered martyrdom at Jerusalem by order of Julian the Apostate.

Never have historical chronology and commonsense been more impudently set at naught by popular fancy than in the above legend.[1] In four generations a family, of which the father was already an old man in A.D. 33, has reached the year 327; the manifestation at the Milvian bridge is transported to the banks of the Danube; Eusebius, the Arian bishop of Nicomedia, who baptised Constantine on his deathbed, is confounded with Pope Eusebius, who was bishop of Rome in 309; Julian the Apostate is made to succeed Constantine; nor was there in the fourth century any bishop of Jerusalem of the name of

[1] Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 179.

Judas or Cyriacus.[1] The last bishop of the name of Judas lived under the Emperor Adrian from 117-138.[2]

Tixeront, who has thoroughly studied the question under all its aspects, opines that the legend took its rise in Mesopotamia in the first half of the fifth century, but he considers that some of its elements are of earlier date, and probably, though in a different form, it was known to Sozomen. We ourselves incline to a different view; between Sozomen's account and the legend there is no point of contact whatever. In the former account the Jews willingly offer their help, and put forward one of their own people, who had the necessary information among his family papers; on the contrary, in the legend the Jews were obstinate, and only yielded on compulsion, and moreover, to begin with, Judas knew no more of the locality in which the Cross was, than Helena herself.

It seldom happens that a legend has not some real fact underlying it, though often, owing to legendary accretions, the fact can only be found with difficulty. In this case the fact is probably some help afforded by the Jews, which popular fancy gradually magnified into the Judas-Cyriacus myth. It is not impossible that the Jew to whose help Helena was mainly indebted was named Jude or Judas, though it is absurd to make him to be a descendant of Zacchæus or a bishop of Jerusalem. However this may be, there are many writers who, like Dom Marie-Bernard,[3] believe that the Jews, hoping to curry favour with Helena, went to meet her on her arrival, and offered of their own accord to guide her by their traditions

[1] [Unless we have here a distant allusion to Cyril.—*Trans.*]

[2] Eus. *H.E.* iv. 5.

[3] *L'Église devant les barbares*, vol. i. p. 40.

to the exact spot where the relics of the Crucifixion would be found.

The Judas-Cyriacus legend received an official commendation in the West by being incorporated in the first edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*; in the sixth century it was already popular, and later on it took its place in the Patrology as the most truthful account of the finding of the Cross.[1] It was only quite late, and by dint of the efforts of two Jesuit scholars, Zaccaria and Papebroch, that it fell into discredit.[2]

The faithful found themselves in the presence of two contradictory traditions, and instead of seeking which one contained the truth they took as true both accounts, in their childlike faith believing simultaneously in the Protonice and Judas legends. However, in the fourth century we already find among the Easterns an effort in the direction of harmony. St. Cyril of Alexandria in an obscure passage of his commentary on Zaccharias says: "It is narrated that at different periods[3] the wood of the Cross was found still bearing the Nails." Tixeront considers that the text is at least worth careful weighing.[4]

To find both the legends actually set side by side we have to come down to the twelfth century, when we find a Syriac MS. dated 1196 kept at the British Museum, and then, again, an old English version made at Dublin in 1686 on a Syriac text.[5] The MS. first recounts the finding of the True Cross by Claudius's wife. Then in a fragment, of which we

[1] Berengosus, *De laude et inventione S. Crucis*, ii. 5, 7; *P.L.* clx. 956-958; Bede, *P.L.* xciv. 494, 495.

[2] Martin, *op. cit.* p. 277.

[3] κατὰ καιροὺς. *P.G.* lxxii. 272. [The translation is uncertain.]

[4] Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 170.

[5] Tixeront, *op. cit.* p. 170.

can nowhere find the counterpart, it tells how, under Trajan, during the persecution in the year 107 and under the episcopate of Simeon, the Blessed Virgin's nephew, who was then one hundred and twenty years of age, the Jews seized the Holy Wood and buried it in a certain place at the depth of twenty times the height of a man. Lastly, the MS. gives the Acts of Judas-Cyriacus, who finds the Cross at a depth of twenty paces. According to this account all that Cyriacus did was to restore to light the Cross which Protonice had already found, and which had been again hidden in the reign of Trajan.

Lipsius comparing the "twenty times a man's height" of the Syriac text with the "twenty paces" of the Latin text, infers that from the beginning the two legends were connected. But Tixeront, with far more acumen, sees in the story of the burial under Trajan a mere connecting link forged by a mediæval copyist to make the two accounts more intelligible. He rightly observes that, for the plurality of the findings to be established, it should be vouched for by the earliest authors and MSS. Now the earliest MSS. relate indeed the Protonice legend, but do not mention the supposed burial of the Cross in 107. The recent date of MS. 12174 deprives the intermediate version it contains of any serious value, and allows us to believe it to be a mere interpolation.

APPENDIX

THE LEGEND OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS

St. Helena restored the Holy Cross to the devotion of the faithful. Popular fancy, determined to celebrate the happy discovery with due effusions, wove about the story of the finding an extraordinary tale—a tale which was only completed in the thirteenth century, when we find woven together in one huge fable the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the burial of Adam, and the Passion. The legend is found here, there, and everywhere, and a list of its forms would form a very considerable bibliography.[1] But there is no doubt that it dates from after the year 327, for its first traces are found in the Gospel of Nicodemus, which cannot be of much earlier date than the beginning of the fifth century.[2]

The writer of this apocryphal Gospel—a writer, by the way, whose methods would deserve far more study than they have received—utilises the tradition which holds that, in the interval between His burial and His Resurrection, Christ descended into hell[3] to console and to bring back with Him the souls of the just who had died under the olden Law. The first act of the drama is placed in Limbo. The patriarchs

[1] See Adolfo Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della Croce*, Sitzungsberichte der Academie der Wissenschaften (Vienna), October 1869, pp. 165-216.

[2] Migne, *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*, vol. i. col. 1088; P. Batiffol, *La littérature grecque*, 2nd ed. 39.

[3] Descendit ad inferos.

are impatiently awaiting the coming of the Messias, whose crucifixion has just been made known to them by John the Baptist; to while away the time they are chatting with one another. Adam, speaking with Seth, says[1]: "Tell thy sons, the patriarchs and the prophets, all the things thou didst learn of Michael the archangel when I sent thee to the gates of Paradise to beseech the angel of the Lord for a little oil of mercy, that thou mightest anoint my body when I was sick."

Seth accordingly addresses his children, and says: "I, Seth, when I stood in prayer before the Lord at the gates of Paradise, lo, Michael the angel of the Lord appeared to me saying: 'I have been sent to thee by the Lord. . . . Verily I say unto thee, Seth, ask no longer in tears for the oil of the Tree of Mercy that thou mayest anoint thy father, and so heal the distemper of his body, for by no means canst thou receive of it, save in the latter days and after five thousand five hundred years shall be accomplished.[2] Then will the Son of God, full of love, come into the world and raise up Adam's body, and then too will He raise the bodies of all the dead."[3]

Surely the charming expression Oil of Mercy presupposes a legend. It was useless for the Christian who calls himself Nicodemus to warn his readers beforehand of the danger of self-delusion, it was vain too for him to remind them that every man must at his last hour ascend Calvary to benefit by the Oil of Mercy, which is the forgiveness of our sins earned by the death of the Son of God. Sinful, suffering souls,

[1] *Ev. Nicod.* xix.; Migne, *Dict.* vol. i. col. 1123; xx. col. 1124.

[2] The author was evidently a millenarian.

[3] Cp. *Ordinale de origine mundi* in H. de la Villemarqué, *Le grand mystère de Jésus*, pp. 42-43.

groaning in their misery, insisted upon their right of conceiving Jesus according to their own ideas, even if their own ideas were not conformable to the reality of things, and so they pondered and dreamed, until in the thirteenth century they had completed the narrative to their own content.

In its perfect form the legend begins with a grand prologue; this is the case in the *Imago Mundi*[1] and in the account of Seth's journey to Paradise, a work extracted from a Life of our Saviour then much in vogue.[2]

Adam feels the approach of death, and sends Seth to request the Oil of Mercy from the angel who guards the gate of Paradise. Seth without difficulty finds the path followed by his parents when making their exit, for though the rank vegetation has overgrown all, the feet of Adam and Eve had so scorched the ground that wherever they had passed there is now a path condemned to perpetual barrenness. In the hazy distance Seth could see a glare like that of a forest on fire, and the flames thereof darting up to the very sky; these were the new boundaries of Paradise; here the angel allowed him to pass his head thrice through the entrance, which was defended by the flaming sword.

"Look!" said the angel; and Seth looking saw Paradise as it had been in the beginning—all dazzling with light, and painted with flowers, and shaded by wonderful luxuriant growths. A giant tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, stands as a guardian over a spring whence four rivers flow.

[1] See Migne, *Dict.* vol. i. col. 1123, note 2361.

[2] Migne, *ibid. Adam*, vol. i. col. 387-388. See also Mussafia, *op. cit.* appendix i. *De morte Adæ*; also Louis Moland, *La légende d'Adam, Revue contemporaine*, 15th July 1855, vol. xx.

"Look again," said the angel; and, behold, the Tree has dropped its fruit and its leaves, even its bark has peeled away, and round the trunk a gigantic serpent has coiled itself in rings, eating into the Tree like a canker.

"Look yet once again," repeated the Angel; and, lo, the Tree of Knowledge has been restored to its pristine beauty, and lifts, even to the skies, its glorious head, on the crown of which stands a child of wonderful beauty; beneath, the serpent is bounding away writhing as he goes.

The angel explains to Seth the mystery of the Atonement, and then gives him three seeds from a fruit of the ancient Tree, from which in time will grow the new tree, which is to furnish the wood of the True Cross.

These details are too well thought out, too artificial, to be spontaneous products of the minds of mediæval Christians; we feel in them the parasitic influence of the troubadours and jugglers of the Middle Ages. Dom Marie-Bernard was successful in disentangling the true popular legend from the midst of the extraneous details which have been heaped around it.[1] Here we find no kind of preamble. Seth sets out to ask of the angel who stands at the gate of Paradise a remedy for his father, who is lying sick even to death. The angel gives Seth a twig of the tree which had been the cause of Adam's downfall, and assures him that as soon as the new tree shall have borne fruit his father will be cured. Full of joy, Seth returns home, but on arriving finds his father already dead. "The angel has deceived me," he muttered bitterly to

[1] *L'Église devant les barbares,* vol i. p. 31. The sources of the information given by Dom Bernard will be found indicated in Mussafia, *op. cit.* pp. 173-177.

himself, and he began to weep over his father's body. But, behold, the angel stands beside him, and says: "Why doubt the Lord's promises? Adam's body has returned to dust, but when the twig shall blossom the day of remission will be at hand, and death will restore its victims. Plant therefore the twig on Adam's tomb, and treasure hope within thy breast." [1]

Seth did as he was told, and the twig struck root, and grew, but very slowly. By the time when Solomon was building his Temple, it was already a huge tree, but it was still sterile. The son of David was struck with admiration at the size of the tree, which cast into insignificance the palm-trees of Idumea and the cedars of Lebanon, and which, moreover, was of a species quite unknown in Palestine. He accordingly ordered it to be cut down that its wood might be used in furnishing the Temple. But it came about that, after the workmen had pared and squared the trunk, they could by no means adapt it or make it fit into the buildings. The mysterious tree seemed to lengthen out and then grow shorter, thus bringing all the plans of the architect to naught. Startled by this wonder, the Jews began to fear that they had sinned in depriving Adam's tomb of its ancient ornament; they therefore deposited in a place of honour within the Temple precincts this venerable remain of the first days of Creation.

A little later, when Solomon received the visit of the queen of Saba, the latter, being on her way to the Temple to adore the God of Israel, caught sight of the Adamic tree lying in the gateway of the cloisters,[2]

[1] As already stated, Adam's tomb according to popular belief was within the rock of Calvary.

[2] According to other accounts it was used as a bridge over a

and on seeing it, was suddenly seized by a prophetic spirit which unfolded to her the future. Falling on the ground, she remained for a long time in ecstasy, and then rising she addressed the king. "Hear, O king," she exclaimed, "what the Almighty has revealed to me. A day will come when this wood will be used to lift up a messenger from heaven, and the death of that messenger will be the confusion of Israel."

After her departure Solomon sought guidance from the Holy of Holies, but the voice which was wont to issue from that sanctuary in the great days of Israel remained silent. The king fearing to offend God by affording the people a pretext for discussing a token of which the national prophecies said nothing, had a deep pit dug, in which the fatal trunk was buried, and then forgotten.

At a later period, in this same portion of the city—*i.e.* between the valley gate and the Temple—there was made the pool which in the Gospel is called *Probatica*, or the sheep pond,[1] and into which an angel descended every year to stir the waters. Lastly, states the legend, when the time of Christ's death was at hand, the wood suddenly appeared floating on the surface of the water, and the Jews, forgetful of the prediction of the queen of Saba, made use of it so as to fashion quickly the Cross for use on Calvary. The Tree of Seth is now about to bear its mystical fruit, and death will soon yield up its prey.

Mussafia[2] and Dom Bernard[3] are both of opinion that this is the most ancient version of the myth, and

watercourse, and the queen of Saba refused to walk over it. Migne, *Dict.* vol. i. col. 1123, note 2631.

[1] Jn. v. 2.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 165.

[3] *L'Église devant les barbares*, vol. i. p. 44.

that it hails from Greece, of which we seem to feel the simplicity and freshness as we read it. Dom Bernard also states that the Greeks attribute it to a convert Jew, Nicodemus—*i.e.* to the author of the apocryphal Gospel which bears this name. On this latter point we cannot agree, as the fragment of the Gospel quoted above is quite sufficient to prove a diversity of authors. At any rate most of the details of the legend were derived from the East, and at a comparatively late date. Thus the episode of the queen of Saba was imported by Adelphus as late as the time of the crusades.[1]

The legend gave rise to several versions, of which it is not always easy to determine the derivation. One is quoted by Mussafia. Adam, we are told, had carried away with him from Paradise a fruit and a branch of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This branch when planted in the soil of the Promised Land became the wood of the Cross.

Yet a third form of the legend is characterised by the manifest wish of bringing Moses and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity into the history of the Tree and of the Crucifixion. In this form the story is incorporated in the *Istoire du monde*[2] and in the *Vie de Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ*.[3]

The angel, according to this account, gives Seth three seeds of the apple into which Adam had bitten. "When thou shalt have come to thy father," says the *Vie de Nostre Seigneur*, "he will die three days after. Thou shalt bury him with the help of his wife and

[1] Migne, *Apocryphes, loc. cit.*

[2] Migne, *Apocryphes.* [Another form is found in the *Geschiedenis van het heylighe Cruys, or History of the Holy Cross.* Reproduced in fac-simile from the original edition by Veldener in 1483. Edited by J. P. Berjeau. London, 1863.—*Trans.*]

[3] *Ibid.*

his children, but before covering his body with earth thou shalt place these three seeds in his mouth, for by his mouth he sinned, and by his mouth it behoveth that his sin be repaired; and then there shall arise from these three seeds, three trees which shall bear and carry the fruit of life."

Adam dies, and Seth carries out his instructions; the seeds germinate on the hillock which later on will be known as Calvary, but so slowly, that at the time of the deluge they had not yet emerged above the ground.[1] They had only reached the rank of bushes by the time of Moses.[2] When the Red Sea had engulfed Pharao and the Egyptians, Moses and Aaron with their brothers Caleb and Josue, came to sing *Alleluia* on the future Calvary. Then did Moses exclaim: "What are those three saplings? Never, upon my word, have I seen three goodlier trees. They figure the three persons of the Trinity. At all costs I will cut them and take them away with me. May God the Father be praised." [3]

Before giving up the ghost, Moses planted the three saplings on Mount Thabor. In the Cornwall mystery-play God the Father is said, during the reign of King David, to have commanded the angel Gabriel[4]: "Hasten to Jerusalem and say to King David that he will find in Arabia, on Mount Thabor, saplings planted by Moses. He must carry them to Jerusalem, for a child shall be born of me at Bethlehem who shall redeem the world, and of the saplings shall be

[1] De la Villemarqué, *Le grand mystère de Jésus*, p. 45.

[2] [Possibly here there may be a reminiscence of the "burning bush," but so far as I know this is not stated explicitly by any version.—*Trans.*]

[3] *Ibid.* p 46.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 47, 48.

made the Cross on which Christ, my beloved son, shall be crucified."

David accordingly brought the three young trees to Jerusalem, where, because the three persons of the Trinity form but one God, they grew up together into a single tree which in a few years attained a gigantic size. We already know how Solomon endeavoured to use this tree in the building of the Temple, and how after fruitless efforts it was deposited in the Temple cloisters.

In this fable the queen of Saba no longer appears, but a woman named Maxilla comes and sits upon the trunk. Her dress catches fire, and being seized by the spirit of prophecy, she foretells the mystery of Golgotha. The Jews are indignant, and accuse her of blasphemy; she is condemned, and dies confessing the Blessed Trinity. The tree is buried, and afterwards is thrown into the sheep pond, and lastly is used for making the True Cross.

Alas! the poetic inspiration is waning fast, and one improbability is heaped upon another: Moses sings Alleluia like a Christian; he speaks of the Blessed Trinity as if Christ had already revealed it; he who died on Mount Nebo as a punishment for his lack of faith is here depicted visiting the Promised Land, Jerusalem, and Thabor. The profound ignorance of the compilers of *Bestiaries* and *Lapidaries* has left its fatal marks on the chaste form of the primitive Eastern tale.

Nevertheless, it was under the latter, degraded, form that the legend succeeded best amongst the Westerns. Under this form it furnished the elements of the Cornwall mystery called the *Ordinale de origine Mundi*,[1] which E. Norris edited from a

[1] *The Ancient Cornish Drama* (Oxford, 1859).

fifteenth-century MS. Hersart de la Villemarqué, in his introduction to the *Grand mystère de Jésus*, committed a strange mistake in supposing that the part played by Maxilla is intended to honour the Maid of Orleans, for Maxilla makes her appearance in the literature of the thirteenth century, long before Joan of Arc perished at the stake.

But the legend had still some time to run; it had to descend even lower on the pathway of decay. In the thirteenth century Hermann, a priest of Valenciennes, inserted into a Bible yet a fourth version in Alexandrine verse. The poem, which is in strophes of eight syllables and is entitled *Nostre Dame Saincte Marie*, has been summarised and explained thrice—once in 1835 by those who continued the Literary History of France begun by the Benedictines of S. Maur,[1] and again in 1836 by Leroux de Lincy,[2] and once more by Count de Douhet.[3]

A thousand years after the Fall, Abraham found in his garden a splendid tree. An angel informs him that this is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which had been transplanted to this place by order of Jehovah, that his daughter will conceive, on smelling the scent of this tree, a knight who will bear in his turn the grandmother of the Saviour, and that lastly the tree will furnish the wood of the True Cross. In the event, what had been predicted happened to the maid, and when, to prove her innocence, she entered into the fire, the flames were changed to flowers. In due season she gave birth to the knight Fanuel, who afterwards became emperor.

[1] XVIII. (ed. Didot, 1835) p. 834.

[2] *Le Livre des Légendes*, Paris: Silvestre, 1836, 24.

[3] *Dict. des Légendes*, art. *S. Anne*, ed. Migne col. 1420.

Fanuel cutting open a fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, wiped his knife on his thigh; the juice penetrating his skin, caused an inflammation. In vain he consulted the doctors: they could suggest no remedy, and the malady was only cured finally by the appearance of a baby girl. The emperor, in great wrath, ordered the child to be carried to the nearest forest, and there slain. A knight undertook to carry out this brutal order, but at the moment he raised his sword to slay the girl an angel appeared, and cried:

> Slay not the poor little thing
> For from her shall rise a virgin
> From whom God shall take flesh and bone
> When to earth He comes to atone. [1]

Accordingly the child is laid in a swan's nest, where she is miraculously nurtured by a goat.

Ten years later Fanuel, hunting in the forests of Jerusalem, pursues the goat, which flies for refuge to the child, who has now become a maiden. The latter motions off the hounds, and requests the sovereign to spare the animal which has been her nurse. The emperor answers: "Who art thou?" "Sire," she replies, "I am she whom thou broughtest into the world."

Fanuel thereupon takes her, and gives her in marriage to the knight Joachim, and becomes the grandfather of Anne, the mother of Christ.

Here we can easily discern the feudal elements of the tale; the trial by fire is the German "Ordeal." Fanuel's daughter and Genevieve of Brabant are

[1] N'occise pas cette meschine
De li istra une virgine
Ou Dex char et sanc prendera
Quant en terre descendera.

sisters, and Dagobert's hunting exploit has suggested the incident of the goat.

The simple beauty of the Greek narrative, the pedantic theology of the *Istoire du monde*, has made room for another form of the legend the heaviness and ungainliness of which we can only compare with the armour of the knights. Pure gold has changed into vile lead, and the tradition has reached its end, slain by a piece of literature of which it is difficult to say which is the more noticeable, its absurdity or its impropriety. The fact is, to compose a Christian legend it is not sufficient to be a master of arts, or a troubadour, or even a priest, like Hermann. The only fit composer of such a real ballad is mankind, suffering and believing mankind. Only those who, like Christ, carry their cross to Golgotha can give to Christ the best of their tenderness and hopes. Only among such do we find true poets of the faith.

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